

Editorial

This issue of *Music and Arts in Action* (MAiA) marks the start of our third year of publication. We have been impressed by the diversity of manuscripts submitted to MAiA, and have especially enjoyed facilitating discussions between authors, reviewers and copyeditors from different disciplinary areas. The authors in this issue have risen to these interdisciplinary challenges and, in so doing, have created rich pieces of empirical work and analysis that bring novel case studies to bear on shared theoretical concerns.

The articles in this issue address varied fields of performance: opera, rock music, and engaged theatre. Taken together, these pieces look in detail at how individual performers, prop-makers, directors, playwrights, composers, and others work interactively with aesthetic materials (e.g., scripts, lights, bodies, musical scores and instruments, etc.) to carefully design and carry out a ‘successful’ performance (both in terms of achieving a set aim of audience impact, as well as seamlessly integrating performer and performance). In other words, success in performance not only requires close attention to an artistic and aesthetic narrative, but also significant emotional and social management by individual performers to play a role in this narrative.

Making Opera Work: Bricolage and the Management of Dramaturgy by Paul Atkinson begins this issue through a deep ethnographic exploration of the mundane work required to assemble an opera production from a variety of physical artefacts (e.g., props, bodies), cultural artefacts (e.g., aesthetics), and social artefacts (e.g., repertoires of performance). In contrast to work following Erving Goffman that uses studies of performances to create social metaphors, Atkinson demonstrates how performers and directors draw on vocabularies of motive and emotion from social life in order to understand the opera. Successful performance, then, is a complicated process of *cultural bricolage*, whereby performers and others use a variety of materials to render their actions accountable to the operatic and artistic narrative.

Women Rockers and the Strategies of a Minority Position by Adele Keala Fournet discusses the results of a recent ethnographic study of female rock instrumentalists in Tampa, Florida. Building on work demonstrating the obstacles and social challenges faced by women in the rock arena, Fournet looks instead at the unique opportunities such women carve out for themselves in a male-dominated art world. The *strategies* identified emanate from the minority status of female rock instrumentalists, and are exercised through the body, through music and through the careful management of social relationships. In looking at how agency may be exerted within solid social boundaries, Fournet puts Pierre Bourdieu’s description of change in *habitus* to work

in an empirical study and finds it to be dangerously vague. In actuality, the creation of a successful rock performance requires much emotional, cultural, and social work to portray oneself as a legitimate performer.

Theatre and Activism: The Agit Prop Theatre Way by Swati Pal investigates agit prop theatre, or theatrical performance with a political end. By looking in detail at the UK-based Red Ladder Theatre Company, Pal examines the aesthetic ingredients that create forceful political agency on the stage. The success of a play in altering the social or political consciousness of its audience requires a close interweaving of script, props, scenic design and other tools for audience engagement with dominant cultural and social meanings and symbols. This historical look at theatrical devices in action provides a window onto the aesthetic forms of social activism work.

Similarly, *Plague and the Moonflower: A Regional Community Celebrates the Environment* by David John Curtis evaluates the role of aesthetic devices in engendering community awareness through a large-scale music performance event. Unpacking the notion of 'beautiful', Curtis examines the role of specific scenes, images and musical phrasings as they impact audience experiences. As with the other articles in this issue, Curtis treats 'success' as a multidimensional concept, involving a variety of variables and interlinked experiences.

In looking in depth at interaction, action and activism in the performing arts, these papers open a valuable dialogue between artists and scholars to unpack the true ingredients of 'success' in performance. Encouraging and exploring this dialogue is at the heart of MAiA's mission to bring academia, artists, and the arts more closely together to enhance our shared understandings of how the arts, in their various guises, figure prominently in our lives.

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

We at MAiA are looking forward to several special and themed issues to be published in 2011. The next issue will be our second themed issue, focusing on *Music and the Arts in Health Promotion and Wellness*. Following this will be two special issues documenting work presented at international conferences examining: improvisation in performance, and music and migration. A call for papers for our third themed issue will be launched shortly at: http://musicandartsinaction.net/index.php/maia/cms/view/call_for_papers. As always, MAiA maintains an open call for general submissions.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM, MUSIC AND ARTS IN ACTION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Music and Arts in Action would not be possible without the generous help and support of a number of individuals. The most invisible, yet most important, of these are the reviewers and copyeditors, to whom we are extremely grateful. The authors, editors and readers of MAiA have all benefited enormously from your ideas, suggestions and thoughtful comments. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank the authors in this issue for their hard work and creativity in producing exciting papers for us all to share.