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Photo by Shannon Mendes

Theatre, the Law, and the Courts

Edited by Reid Gilbert

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While the connections among the law, its courtrooms and theatre are evident, this issue examines the links among these performative agencies through a series of lenses, considering the roles of education, theatrical training, ritual, narrative and the archival record in the more fraught question of truth and the boundaries among memory, “reality” and fiction. The articles describe a number of performances that feature courtrooms or that hinge on legal issues, extending these discussions to consider issues of cognitive psychology, contingency, the effect of story-telling, the role and power of Officers of the Court (including the assignment of criminality) and the process of justice. The authors raise provocative questions about methodologies of training and the role of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in our expectations of legal practice, about the role of art in the rehabilitation of young offenders, about the role of television in the popular imagination (an imagination that expects dramatic resolutions to legal issues, and often assumes that these will resemble American courtroom drama) and about the place of theatre in establishing community standards. Interviews discuss the work lawyers perform within show business, and the stressful effect on a witness pulled into the legal system. The script, itself the result of a legal challenge, explores the process of making that is theatre, within the context of personal memory and the limits of the law.

This issue of *CTR* aims to develop the easy assumption of the law as somehow “theatrical” by interrogating a range of definitions and by linking fiction to notions of truth and the admissibility of evidence.

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