

Performance and Migration in the Nordic and Baltic Regions

A proposal for a special issue of *Nordic Theatre Studies*

Edited by Rebecca Brinch and Dirk Gindt

This proposed special journal issue of *Nordic Theatre Studies* critically explores how performing arts and practices make room for experiences of migration. The term ‘migration’ is understood in a broad sense, encompassing emigration, immigration, dislocation, and integration. It also includes voluntary as well as forced migration such as the migration of labour, relatives, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, and refugees. Migration is not a new phenomenon and has occurred throughout history. The performing arts have addressed the subject in various ways over time, both onstage and behind the scenes (Bharucha 2000; Said 2000; Wilmer 2001; Cox 2014; 2015; Meerzon 2012; 2020).

The journal issue asks how the performing arts and practices can create inclusive dramaturgies, linguistic diversity, and culturally diverse representations that make room for experiences of migration. It also asks how the stage is a space where intercultural and polylingual performance practices can be expressed and celebrated and how this, in turn, affects the composition and demographic background of audiences. Finally, the special issue seeks to study if and how theatre and performance represent decolonization and witness testimonies of Indigenous peoples and their experiences of migration and forced dislocations.

In the last decade, European countries have witnessed a large increase of migrants, refugees, and political asylum seekers, also in the Nordic and Baltic regions. These political developments continue to have a palpable effect on performance (and cultural life in general), affecting not only the repertoires of many theatres, but also their way of working as well as the composition of ensembles and audiences. At the same time, populist and culturally conservative political discourses risk paving the way for an essentializing view of culture that excludes minority groups, Indigenous peoples, immigrant and refugee communities as well as artistic expressions that do not harmonize with a nationally conservative agenda. Additionally, the Nordic and Baltic regions have experienced forced dislocations as a result of shifting national borders, settler-colonial politics, the Russian Revolution, the rise of Stalinism, the Winter and Continuation Wars, and the Cold War. Many of these historical developments are only now being studied both by performing artists and theatre and performance scholars.

Internationally, Performance and Migration is a growing topic of interest for Theatre and Performance Studies as demonstrated by the recent publication of Yana Meerzon and S.E. Wilmer's *The Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Migration* (2023) or the ERC-funded research project T-Migrants on nineteenth-century European theatre migrants. Additionally, there are ongoing attempts to launch special working groups in international theatre organizations and numerous departments have started to offer courses in this area. The special issue of NTS writes itself into these developments and encourages articles that explore some of the following questions:

- How do the performing arts in the Nordic and Baltic regions represent and stage contemporary and historical experiences of migration and dislocation?
- As a result of historical and contemporary migration patterns, which bodies are being represented onstage? Whose stories are being told? Whose voices are being heard? And – equally important – which bodies, stories, and voices are being ignored?
- Which new dramaturgies have emerged as a result of migration and dislocation?
- How has migration led to the integration of multiple languages into performance?
- How has the constitution and perception of audiences shifted as a result? Have audiences become more diversified?
- What is the impact of migration and dislocation on cultural politics more generally and theatre politics in particular, not least regarding economic support?

Authors are encouraged to pay particular attention to questions of diversity, inclusion, racialization, age, gender, and/or language in their suggested papers. Please send your abstracts or any questions you might have to: rebecca.brinch@su.se and dirk.gindt@teater.su.se.

Timeline

- 1 May 2024: deadline to submit an abstract (300 words) and short bio (100 words)
- 31 May 2024: invited contributors will receive a message of confirmation
- 1 October 2024: contributors submit the first version of the article (5,000-6,000 words all inclusive), which will be sent out to external reviewers
- February 2025: contributors receive the readers' reports
- May 2025: final versions are submitted
- Fall 2025: publication, including a co-written introduction by the editors

Bios and contact info

Rebecca Brinch holds a PhD in Theatre Studies and is a researcher at the Department of Aesthetics and Culture at Stockholm University. Her research expertise lies in the area of migration in theatre for young audiences. Dirk Gindt is professor of Theatre Studies in the same department and works on

decolonization and Sámi performance. Together with a colleague, they have recently co-edited a Swedish volume (*Berätta, överleva, inte drunkna*) collecting essays by both scholars and performing artists who work on issues on migration, anti-racism and decolonization.

Works cited:

Bharucha, Rustom (2000), *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

Cox, Emma (2014), *Theatre and Migration*. Basingstoke; Palgrave Macmillan.

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Meerzon Yana, David, Dean & McNeil, David (eds) (2020), *Migration and Stereotypes in Performance and Culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Meerzon, Yana & Wilmer, S. E (eds) (2023) *The Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Migration*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Said, Edward (2000), *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge: University Harvard Press
T-Migrants - Crossing Borders: The Agency of Nineteenth-Century European Theatre Migrants, <https://www.t-migrants.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/>

Wilmer, S. E (2001), *Theater, Society and the Nation. Staging American Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.