

# Now

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Once again during the life of the journal, I find myself sitting down to write an editorial against the background of great turmoil in Europe. In 1989, we reconceived the issue we had been working on to collect new material in response to the evolving revolutions in Central Europe, where thousands filled the squares of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany, culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of that year. A few days later, East German playwright Heiner Müller came to New York for a performance at The Kitchen of "The Man in the Elevator" sequence from his play *The Task*, from our *Hamletmachine* volume. He was in disbelief and shock that he would live to see the collapse of East Germany. "How ironic," I wrote then in *PAJ* 35/36, "that what was once called the 'iron curtain' should dissolve in the gestures of citizen/actors in a new historical drama." In that momentous time, the Western world looked forward to a new future and the end of the Cold War, if not history. Now, after the brutality of the attack foisted on Ukraine by Vladimir Putin, many are speaking of a new Iron Curtain in Europe, and with it a new Cold War. The citizen/actors have again appeared in the European theatre. Today's news of a war on the continent seventy years after the end of World War II sparked a memory of the early offices of *PAJ*, situated in the late seventies on St. Marks Place in New York City's East Village, home to many Ukrainian immigrants who had left their country during the Communist era. Those of us who lived in this area frequented the inexpensive local restaurants, with names like "Kiev," "Odessa," "Ukrainian National Home," and "Veselka." There were organizations, cultural centers, churches, and stores established by the Ukrainian population. Some of these places still exist. Their culture mixed with the bohemian culture downtown in those days.

Shadowing this historical landscape, the current issue opens with an excerpt from the diaries, edited by Kate Bredeson, of the great theatre woman and activist, Judith Malina, who chronicles The Living Theatre's visit to the Berliner Ensemble in Germany six months before the Berlin Wall was constructed. A few years later, she meets her former teacher there, Erwin Piscator. America will become fascist, he tells her. Malina's observations of a European continent still recovering from World

War II are perceptive and heartfelt, illuminating her thoughts on art and politics, wrapped around a complex emotional life. Perhaps most revealing is the profound spiritual sense this daughter of a rabbi reflects. Brecht seems to be insistent in the pages of *PAJ*, where W. B. Worthen offers a fine-tuned analysis of The Wooster Group's continuing experiments with live and recorded sound in the author's 1932 play *The Mother*, which Worthen views as a dialogue with the 1958 Berliner Ensemble production featuring Helene Weigel, whom Malina had met on her visit there a few years later.

Turning from historic interests, *PAJ* moves in another direction in expanding its long-time focus on interdisciplinary work with a special feature on new Music and Poetry, featuring three very different composers: Kate Soper, Matthew Aucoin, and Seth Parker Woods, who open up new perspectives on classics and the contemporary, text and texture, language and voice in their compositions for today's stages. Elsewhere in the issue the unique *sprechstimme* that defined the late Robert Ashley's theatrical approach is explored in commentary on *eL/Aficionado*, the fourth piece in his opera tetralogy *Now Eleanor's Idea*.

Politics, history, myth, language, technology—these subjects run through the entire issue, including in the reports from last year's Avignon Festival, with its utopian/dystopian themes, and the Grec Festival in a post-referendum Barcelona; in the need for poetry highlighted in reviews of Tiago Rodrigues's *By Heart* and Anne Carson's *H of H Playbook*; and in the engaging video and installations of Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson that play with historical styles. This year marks the third winter of the pandemic, so it is not surprising that new books about theatre-making have now started to appear, and a few of them are written about in our pages as the beginning of what will surely be a growing bibliography in the field.

In *3 Annunciations*, his 2020 play published here, Pascal Rambert's reimagining of the Angel Gabriel's visit to the Virgin Mary to tell her she will bear a child, the son of God, sums up the spirit of the age we are living in. Three different women, three time periods. Is it a meditation on the end of the world? The coming of a new world? What does the announcement mean for our era? A young girl fleeing through a catastrophic landscape with her actress mother says to her, remembering times past:

we said things like the era of media the fourth estate we said management  
and the workforce we said lack of consensus we said conflict resolution  
we said 70 years of peace in Europe we said entire generations have not  
experienced war a continent with 70 years of peace carefree youth that time  
when we said things like that we walked on the road my mother held me  
in her arms

That peace is broken and we do not yet know the new topographies of our world in the future tense.