

Introduction

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Dramaturgy: an overview of the concept from *Poetics* to *Smash*

In its broader and earliest definition, dramaturgy means a comprehensive theory of “play making.” The original Greek compound word, *dramatourgos*, meant simply a play maker, play composer, that is, a playwright. According to Aristotle, the root word “drama” came from the Attic verb that simply meant “action” (δρᾶν = “to do” or “to make”). The second morpheme, “tourgos,” was derived from the Greek word “ergo” (ἔργον = “work” or “composition”), which meant “working together.” Aristotle often used it in its vernacular meaning, as the connector “therefore.” (This meaning eventually entered Latin, where it was most famously used by Descartes in his maxim *cogito ergo sum* – “I think therefore I am.”) Thus, originally, *dramatourgos* simply meant someone who was able to arrange various dramatic actions in a meaningful and comprehensive order. To this day, in many modern languages, including French, Spanish, and Polish, the word *dramaturg* also can mean playwright, adding to the confusion as the two roles continue to be conflated. As dramaturgy attempts to define itself separately from playwriting, the etymology of the word can help us illuminate its many historical and modern uses. Everyone can be a playwright (or, at least, everyone can write a bad play), but not everyone can be a dramaturg (that is, not everyone will actually know how to fix it). Dramaturgy requires the analytical skill of discerning and deconstructing all elements of dramatic structure.

We can say that although Aeschylus was the first Western playwright, Aristotle, whose *Poetics* was the first Western book attempting to define the formal rules of well-structured drama, was the very first Western dramaturg. Trying to find the optimal recipe for a successful piece of dramatic work, Aristotle deconstructed all its components, including plot, character, theme, language, rhythm, and spectacle. In *The Poetics*, he considers *plot* (μῦθος = mythos) as the most important element of drama, defining it as “the arrangement of the incidents.” A plot must have all the necessary elements: unified and logical beginning, middle, and end. The arrangement of the incidents must be such that the cause-and-effect chain reaction (*desis*) leads to climax and eventually to believable and internally coherent unraveling (*lusis*). A successful plot has all the elements in the proper order; it includes reversal (*peripeteia*), recognition (*anagnorisis*), and the scene of suffering (*pathos*), and it leads to a cathartic purging of emotions. A plot is not a story or a narrative but rather a dramaturgical scaffolding

that arranges the order of storytelling incidents in an order that culminates in cathartic release. In this earliest Aristotelian model, the dramaturg concerns him- or herself foremost with plot, the arrangement of incidents – in other words, with dramatic structure.

This definition of dramaturgy as a comprehensive theory of dramatic structure is the cornerstone of modern dramaturgical practice. This is also how the concept of dramaturgy is viewed in popular culture. In the February 2013 episode of the hit TV series *Smash*, titled “The Dramaturg,” a dramaturg is referred to as “the book doctor.” His job is to fix the structural errors afflicting the script of the new musical. This particular example of the pop culture use of the word “dramaturg” reflects a broader understanding of the concept of dramaturgy to mean any purposeful arrangement of events, as in the dramaturgy of one’s life, war, or political campaign.

Evolution of the dramaturg: from Germany to America

The concept of dramaturgy as a separate theatrical function originated with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), whose collection of essays, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1769), introduced both the actual term and the figure of the “in-house critic,” whose role was to assist a theatre in the process of play development. Employed as a resident critic at the Hamburg National Theatre, Lessing, who was also a playwright, advised the theatre’s management on its selection of plays and offered his own criticism of each production. Lessing understood dramaturgy as “the technique (or poetics) of dramatic art, which seeks to establish principles of play construction.”¹ He saw his function within the theatre foremost as that of a kind of “public educator” whose role was to “enlighten the mass and not confirm them in their prejudices or in their ignoble mode of thought.”² Challenging public tastes and promoting the highest aesthetic standards was part of Lessing’s dramaturgical mission. Although Lessing’s influence on his contemporaries was negligible, his occupation set the precedent. In 1775, von Gemmingen wrote *Mannheimer Dramaturgie*. In 1789, von Knigge published *Dramaturgische Blätter*, and in 1791, Albrecht completed *Neue Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. The second most renowned dramaturg following Lessing, however, was the German poet and critic, Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), who together with August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) translated Shakespeare’s collected works into German. The project, which began in 1797 and was completed in 1833,³ widened the scope of the dramaturg’s functions to further include translation and adaptation. With Lessing and Tieck, dramaturgy established itself as an essential practice in the German theatrical landscape.

Following World War II, Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) introduced the new notion of production dramaturgy. In Brecht’s theatre, “The dramaturg became the director’s most important theoretical collaborator. Dramaturgy in Brecht’s sense comprises the entire conceptual preparation from its inception to its realization.”⁴ With Brecht, the task of the dramaturg broadened further to include researching and clarifying the “political and historical as well as the aesthetic and formal aspects of a play.”⁵ The dramaturg was to participate in rehearsals and to convey his research and knowledge to other members of the production team, particularly the director, before and during

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the production process. He was also to function as a liaison between the team and the audience, writing program notes and theoretical articles on the production. Following Brecht, another German playwright, Heiner Müller (1929–95), established the tradition of dramaturgical training as an essential component of playwriting. By the time Müller became the dramaturg at the Berliner Ensemble in 1972, Germany already had established as an institution the literary manager, the idea of which had slowly begun spreading beyond German borders. Britain's first well-known literary manager was Kenneth Tynan (1927–80), who was brought to the National Theatre in the early sixties by the then artistic director, Laurence Olivier. Tynan established his position in British theatre and the position of the National Theatre in particular through his function as the country's chief dramaturg, one responsible for the national dialogue in addition to (or perhaps a byproduct of) his dramaturgical role.

Around the same time, in the early sixties, the US landscape of regional theatres slowly began developing, with the Guthrie Theater (founded in 1963) and the American Conservatory Theatre (founded in 1965), among others, leading the way. In 1966, the Yale School of Drama's theatre criticism program was launched, and eleven years later, in 1977, the first MFA in dramaturgy was conferred. The event is generally acknowledged as the turning point for American dramaturgy in that it established dramaturgy as an official field of study, a theatrical function, and a profession in the US. In 1978, Yale *Theater* magazine published a dramaturgy issue, edited by Joel Schechter, which crystalized and defined the program and the field. In 1986, the magazine issued another dramaturgy issue, edited by Mark Bly, which further defined the role of dramaturg in American Theatre. Following the Yale School of Drama, many other dramaturgy programs, both graduate and undergraduate, appeared, and the major US theatres began creating their own literary offices that would eventually employ the graduates of these programs. For the next thirty years, American dramaturgy developed alongside European models, guided primarily by the German example of production dramaturgy and literary office management, with each regional theatre developing its own models suitable for its particular socio-cultural and economic circumstances. As Mark Bly notes, during that time “[i]n addition to growth within the field, several dramaturgs have chosen to become artistic directors of major theatre organizations, a logical result of the dramaturg's wide-ranging, yet in-depth, knowledge of dramatic literature and the theatrical process. A few enterprising dramaturgs have also ventured into opera, dance, film and television, extending the profession into other disciplines.”⁶ Funded primarily through private donations, American regional theatres served traditionally different functions than that of state-funded European theatres. In most cases, American dramaturgs working at regional theatres weren't as concerned with preserving the national theatrical legacy as they were with creating work that reflected the current social and cultural moment. Since then, a number of seminal books and handbooks on dramaturgy have been published, among them the most important: Mark Bly's *The Production Notebooks: Theatre in Process, Volume One* (1995) and *The Production Notebooks: Theatre in Process, Volume 2* (2001); *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book* (1996), edited by Susan S. Jonas, Geoffrey S. Proehl, and Michael Lupu; Bert Cardullo's *What Is Dramaturgy?* (2000); *The Process of Dramaturgy: A Handbook*

(2010), by Scott R. Irelan and Anne Fletcher; and Michael Mark Chemers' *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy* (2010).

Dramaturgy of life: sociological and vernacular context

The vernacular understanding of the concept of dramaturgy as a purposeful arrangement of events evolved simultaneously from the fields of both theatre and sociology. In 1959, the term was used for the first time as a sociological category by Erving Goffman in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman's dramaturgical theory of human behavior viewed everyday life as a series of theatrical events, performed along the lines of pre-established social scripts. (It is this sociological notion of the dramaturgy of everyday life that gave rise to performance studies, which defines performance as existing between "theatre and anthropology."⁷) With everyone performing a "character," Goffman argued, human identity is not stable, but constantly reframed and redefined by the dramaturgy of one's role performed in response to external interactions. We become who we are and develop our own self-image based on dramaturgical analysis of our social relations and the roles we are constantly asked to perform. In other words, we are the dramaturgs of our lives and of ourselves because we create meaning out of the lived events (choosing some and discarding others to create a coherent and meaningful life story). Following Goffman, other sociologists used the term to further define social relationships in terms of the dramaturgical model: for example, Gregory Adams in *All the World's a Stage* (1963); Dennis Brissett and Charles Edgley, eds, in *Life as Theater: A Dramaturgical Source Book* (1990) and Charles Edgley, ed. in *The Drama of Social Life: A Dramaturgical Handbook* (2013). The blending of theatrical and sociological jargons has further broadened the concept of dramaturgy. Most recently, dramaturgy has entered the newest interdisciplinary field of technoself studies, which focus on analyzing the construction of human identity vis-à-vis technology, particularly virtual environments, such as video games and online identities. In both theatrical and sociological contexts, virtual dramaturgy is the latest frontier of dramaturgical pursuits.

Postdramatic dramaturgy

In the last decade, the digital, new-media revolution and the changes in the theatre-making process that it inspired have influenced not only the global theatrical landscape but also the function and role of dramaturgy in and outside of the theatre. Some of these recent changes have been long in the making and grew out of earlier cultural and aesthetic trends. Starting in the 1960s the postdramatic performances "repeatedly disconnected individual theatrical tools from their larger contexts."⁸ The idea of postdramatic theatre was first introduced by Andrzej Wirth (1927–), a Polish theatre theorist and the founder of the famous Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen, Germany, to describe the type of postmodern, abstract theatrical forms that were no longer dialogic, linear, or realistic. Wirth's concept of postdramatic theatre

was influenced by a Hungarian theorist, Peter Szondi (1929–71), whose book *Theory of Modern Drama* (1965, first published in English in 1987) defined Drama as a particular dramaturgical structure that emerged in the seventeenth century and that was both Dialogic (“consist[ing] only of the reproduction of interpersonal relations”) and Absolute (“conscious of nothing outside itself”). In Drama, Szondi writes, “accident is domesticated; it is rooted in the heart of drama itself.”⁹ In other words, in Drama, dramaturgical contingency is absorbed into the internal logic of the dramatic structure. Not so with postdramatic “theatre without drama,” which escapes the Aristotelian logic of plot and character in favor of a non-dialogic, non-linear, and non-narrative form that is, like modern art, often guided by accidental and abstract modes of representation.

Following Wirth and Szondi, Hans-Thies Lehmann (1944–) in his pivotal book *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999) continued to define the type of postmodern, postdramatic theatre which emerged after World War II and “which is no longer even based on ‘drama’.”¹⁰ Twentieth-century theatre, Lehmann argues, has undergone “the transformation that has *mutually estranged theatre and drama and has distanced them even further from each other.*”¹¹ Consequently, “the idea of theatre as a representation of a *fictive cosmos* in general has been ruptured and even relinquished altogether, a cosmos whose closure was guaranteed through drama and its corresponding theatre aesthetic.”¹² With the advent of the twenty-first century, the new-media revolution has accelerated the transformation towards non-linear, non-narrative, immersive theatrical experience that is increasingly reflective of a changing and fragmented global cultural landscape and its audiences. As Robert Lepage put it: “We are confronted with audiences whose narrative vocabulary has evolved ... They can read stories backwards now, and jump cut, and can flash forward.”¹³ The changes of the last decade have altered both the very nature of the theatre-making process, which is increasingly moving towards a devised, collaborative, and globalized mode, and the relationship between theatre and the audience, which expects increasingly sophisticated and challenging narratives. These changes in theatre-making and its reception in turn have affected the field of dramaturgy on multiple levels: the production process, research, literary office management, and audience outreach. With new times comes new theatre, and with new theatre comes new dramaturgy.

Dramaturgy of now and of the future

The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy is intended to serve as a primary sourcebook for dramaturgy students, practitioners, and academics. The goal of this collection is to frame dramaturgy in the contemporary context, taking into consideration the new-media revolution and the increasingly interdisciplinary and intermedial nature of performance-based artworks. This book is intended to serve as a primary survey of the increasingly expanding field, offering the broadest possible theoretical and practical application of dramaturgical practice: one that encompasses collaborative works, musical theatre, dance, opera, multimedia, film, and video game design – art forms previously neglected in the discussion of dramaturgical practice. Since the dramaturgical method of research and analysis can have broad application across

multiple art forms and disciplines, the potential career options for dramaturgs have been expanding to venues outside of theatre. Because contemporary dramaturgs engage in a variety of tasks related to the production process, audience outreach, and institutional management, the goal of this anthology is to provide a framework for different aspects of the ever-expanding field.

Dramaturgy in the global context

Part I, “World dramaturgy in the twenty-first century,” offers a global survey of the field as it currently stands across six continents. In some countries, like Germany, the UK, the USA, and to a lesser degree Canada and India, where dramaturgy has an established tradition, the recent changes have been rooted in past practices and reflect the evolution of the field as it attempts to adjust and respond to the modern paradigm shift. In other countries, such as France, Poland, and Russia, where dramaturgy has always existed as a skill but where it has only recently begun establishing itself as a function and a field separate from playwriting, dramaturgical practice develops in congruence with the information age and globalization, while simultaneously responding to the postmodern “crisis” of the dramatic text as reflected in and by the crisis of national identity that it has traditionally embodied (from Racine to Chekhov). Dramaturgy in these countries often finds itself deconstructing and reconstructing a sense of national identity, while preoccupied with “adaptation, the rewriting of classic texts, and literary assemblage” (see Rudnev, p. 62, this volume).

In some countries, like Brazil, Chile, Australia, and South Africa, which continue to struggle with their own postcolonial legacies, dramaturgy has been developing as an interdisciplinary tool of cultural transformation aiming to bridge the post-traumatic gaps in the sociopolitical fabric of the respective nations. As Peter Eckersall puts it, “symptomatic of the history of domination and colonialism’s violent ruptures” (p. 103, this volume), postcolonial dramaturgy attempts to negotiate the many conflicting narratives of history that are fraught with trauma, subjection, and dispossession. Similarly, in countries like Japan and Syria, dramaturgy’s main function is to navigate the hybrid performances that blend multiple theatrical forms, particularly traditional ethnic traditions and Western-influenced modern theatrical modalities. In yet other countries, like China and Iran, where theatre is fully subsidized by the state and where it remains foremost as its ideological arm, dramaturgy has been forced to face its own internal politicized division between the “unofficial” dramaturgs who often censor and control theatrical language and the “official” ones who attempt to circumvent them. The spectre of this type of politicized dramaturgy still haunts Central and Eastern Europe, manifesting itself in its own postcolonial legacy.

Part II, “Dramaturgy in the age of globalization,” builds on the previous overview of world dramaturgy. With the rise of the new information age, theatre-making has not been immune to the fast-paced global exchange of goods and ideas. Thanks to the internet and the digital revolution, average theatregoers are now more aware than ever of their interconnected and interdependent relationships with people and places other than their own. Like cultural artifacts and mimes, theatre artists move between countries, continents, and neighborhoods with greater ease, creating works that

must necessarily negotiate between specific local and global identities. In this new context, dramaturgy emerges as an essential interlink that translates and connects the vast and varied cultural paradigms. As Tom Sellar puts it in his essay, “The dramaturg as globalist”:

In the era of digital media, theatre practitioners around the world find themselves interconnected as never before; productions, plays, and proposals circulate with fluidity, assisted by a globalized economy and its infrastructure; collaborations and partnerships form readily and regularly across national borders as a de-centered art world orientates itself to new opportunities and imperatives. International collaboration is today a structural necessity rather than an isolated ideological or artistic gesture. The dramaturg, scholar, and critic must offer a practice informed by global currents, maintaining links to multiple theatre cultures as well as supplying expertise and context both at home and externally.

(p. 117, this volume)

Although globalization can threaten local theatre ecosystems (as Jens Peters argues with regard to the National Theatre’s live streaming of their shows), it can also offer unprecedented opportunities for theatre to become part of global cultural and political dialogue. In the USA in particular, the rise of the internet, and the replacement of virtual spaces for physical interactions, goes hand in hand with the decline of communal and civic life (as Robert Putnam famously argued in his 2001 classic, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*). Jacqueline Olds and Richard S. Schwartz (2009) warn us further that despite greater virtual interconnectivity, the “increased aloneness” and “the movement in our country toward greater social isolation” are detrimental to our health and well-being.¹⁴ The paradigm of American loneliness is slowly becoming a global phenomenon as other developed and developing nations replicate our lifestyles. Rather than fearing the challenges of globalization, theatre should and must embrace them as an opportunity to find for itself a unique space of communal interaction that can bridge the gaps between virtual and physical spaces, both global and local identities. Because of its roots and historical tradition (going back as far as Tieck and his project of translating Shakespeare into German), the role of the dramaturg has always been quasi-globalist. Now, more than ever, the dramaturgical function, its theoretical and practical methodologies and applications, faces an enormous opportunity to seize the challenge and to assert its central position on the global stage.

The changing role and place of the dramaturg

Since its Aristotelian origins, dramaturgy has undergone many transformations, and Part III, “Dramaturgy in motion: demolitions, definitions, and demarcations,” looks at the current redefinition of the term as it develops in the contemporary multimedia landscape. Modern dramaturgy sees itself as a field, profession, skill, and verb; as a tool of inquiry, a liberal art, and theatrical practice. The increasingly interdisciplinary

nature of theatre-making demands new tools, which, in turn, affect dramaturgical practice. As Hans-Thies Lehmann and Patrick Primavesi put it:

Transdisciplinary theatre projects attract new audiences by deviating from the familiar interpretation of dramatic texts on stage. Thus contemporary dramaturgy is facing a challenge: to develop creative ideas in cooperation with authors and directors; to ensure the quality of theatrical work based on a fruitful communication process within the production team; to invent helpful concepts for season schedules and for cultural institutions in general; to enhance unconventional modes of exchange and discourse.

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How do dramaturgs see themselves and their work in these new contexts of transdisciplinary, collaborative, and devised theatre? Some, as Jessica Kaplow Applebaum argues, define themselves through hyphenated titles which designate their many multidisciplinary positions. Others use their dramaturgical training to expand their reach into other fields and industries. Dramaturgy increasingly is becoming detached from the specific theatrical function and becoming a skill necessary for the entire creating team involved in the theatre-making process to employ in the process of development and audience outreach. The dramaturgical skills of analysis, critical and structural thinking, and interconnectivity also become tools that can cross artistic boundaries and gain applicability in a world outside of theatre. There is danger in that the dramaturg, as Lawrence Switzky tells us, risks becoming a specialist without a specialty. If everyone can do dramaturgy, and the dramaturg can do everything, who is she, then, and what is her *métier*? How dramaturgy and dramaturgs define themselves and their profession in the next decade will be essential not just for the future of their field but for theatre itself and for its potential to participate in the new information age.

The dramaturg's artistic leadership and vision is the subject of Part IV, which focuses on the privileges and responsibilities of the literary office. In their participation in season planning and new play development, dramaturgs have always had leadership and quasi-producing roles, but their full impact only recently has gained national and international attention. As Gideon Lester rightly notes, in Europe, the artistic leadership positions are held more often than not by dramaturgs and literary managers. Lester also notes that transplanting this model to US soil would require redefining the what and how of American dramaturgy:

Rather than keeping them in supporting roles, perhaps the theatre world might begin by readying them to compete for leadership positions, that is, to become artistic directors, curators, programmers, creative producers, beyond the limitations of the institutional dramaturg's traditional function. This would entail an expansion of the definition of dramaturgy to include the articulation of a broadened institutional vision, so that the shaping and running of a theater or cultural center itself becomes a dramaturgical practice. ... Some of the most entrepreneurial performing arts organizations in the United States have leaders who operate on a dramaturg-curator-producer-programmer

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continuum, even if they don't consider their primary work to be dramaturgical.

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In many European countries with a well-established dramatic tradition, theatre often shapes the national dialogue, and the dramaturgs shape what's shown at the theatres. If you want to influence social and political debate in your country, one sure way is to become a playwright or a dramaturg (Václav Havel, for example, was a writer, dramaturg, and playwright who became Czechoslovakia's first democratically elected president). In the US, where the majority of theatres are either not-for-profit or commercial ventures, the selection of the season has artistic as well as financial implications. The two goals, artistic and financial, often are viewed as incompatible. European governments have had a time-honored convention of heavily subsidizing their cultural institutions, particularly their performing arts. In exchange, the performing arts have tacitly fulfilled a specific social function: they are tasked with funneling and promoting the voice of the nation as an expression of the cultural and national identity of its people. Without such social, cultural, and artistic pressures, but with plenty of financial concerns, the season-planning aspect of artistic and dramaturgical leadership in the US is wrought with challenges. As a result, theatre's implicit mission often becomes to be an extension of the voice and vision not of the people it is supposed to serve, but of its artistic director.

Historically, the American regional theatres have been run by white males, who have promoted the work of other white males, catering to predominantly white audiences. The changes in the US population have led to the decline of these traditional audiences, provoking re-examination of these longstanding leadership models. Looking at two case studies with two different season-planning strategies, one at the Guthrie Theater and the other at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, illustrates some of the most salient aspects of literary office management and dramaturgical leadership. The Guthrie is one of the best, but certainly not the only, example of outdated season-planning practices, as illustrated by the short-lived outburst over its all-male, all-white 2012–13 season. Although sharply at odds with its much-lauded explicit mission of cultural diversity, the Guthrie nonetheless continues to demand the support of its increasingly diverse communities and taxpayers. In response to the outrage at the uniformity of its season, Joe Dowling, the Guthrie's then artistic director, called the demands for greater diversity at his theatre a "self-serving argument," thus promulgating the assumption that everyone's "self-serving" impulses, except his own, are ethically questionable (p. 256, this volume). Dowling feels fully entitled to treat the theatre in his care as an extension and expression of his own white, male identity. What's more, he assumes that it is morally just – the way of the world – that others unquestionably serve his singular vision, supporting it with public and private money.

Oregon Shakespeare Theatre's dramaturgically driven season planning and literary leadership present a new alternative to the Guthrie's leadership. As Julie Felise Dubiner, associate director of American Revolutions at the OSF, puts it, "The long view is that whether we are responding from an ethical impulse or a desire for survival, we need to keep striving towards creating institutions that are welcoming to artists and audiences" (p. 252, this volume). The Oregon Shakespeare Festival has been a

leader in inclusive initiatives since 1991, when it first formed the Diversity Council. Since then, the OSF has been committed to diversity and inclusion in all aspects of theatre work, including “play selection, hiring, casting, marketing and public relations efforts, education and outreach programs, recruitment of volunteers, and the composition of the Boards of Directors” (p. 253, this volume). Driven by Lue Douthit, the director of Literary Development and Dramaturgy, the OSF’s dramaturgical leadership has been crucial in making both the theatre staff and the audiences aware of the numerous issues at stake in the process of representation.

The changing makeup of American audiences will eventually force all theatres to restructure their season-planning practices, as will the emergence of new technologies that are altering our theatre-going habits. With Netflix, YouTube, and other internet services providing any type of entertainment on demand, in the privacy of one’s own home, the ritual of going to the theatre is becoming increasingly endangered. In the December 2013 issue of *The Wall Street Journal*, drama critic Terry Teachout observes: “The idea that you might voluntarily go out at night to see a half-dozen human beings act out a story in person ... is now alien to most Americans, especially younger ones.”¹⁵ If it is to survive these two major paradigm shifts (the changes in population and the emergence of new streaming technologies), American theatre needs dramaturgical leadership to both broaden and maintain its audience base. As Ken Cerniglia notes in his essay, to reach a broad audience, theatres must start considering the dramaturgy of appeal. New collaborative technologies, peer-to-peer exchange platforms, and user-driven feedback create new opportunities for virtual literary office management that can change our season-planning practices. In Europe, such an approach has been implemented in a number of countries for over a decade. This includes the searchable database of plays in translation developed by the Information Centre for Drama in Europe (ICDE) (www.playservice.net) with founding partners from Finland, England, Germany, France, and the Netherlands; the Polish database of all plays produced in Poland since 1900, including scanned reviews, posters, and programs (www.e-teatr.pl), and the UK database of English-language plays (www.doollee.com). In the US, the National New Play Network (www.nnpn.org) is leading the way in transforming the practice of literary office management and dramaturgical leadership. Other virtual networks such as New Play Map (www.newplaymap.org), New International Theatre Experience (www.nitecorp.com and www.nitenews.org), and The Playwrights’ Center (www.pwcenter.org) provide additional tools for virtual office management, play exchange, and peer-to-peer collaborations. It is up to the dramaturgical field at large to see how to use the new technology to remain relevant and to advance the practice of theatre in the most inclusive way.

Dramaturgy in context

Part V, “Dramaturg as context manager,” provides an overview of one of the most salient dramaturgical practices: contextualization of the theatrical experience. At the 2014 Consumer Electronics Show, Marissa Meyer, CEO of Yahoo, proclaimed that “the future of search is contextual.”¹⁶ If for IT businesses the future is contextual, for dramaturgs the past has been contextual since the beginning of the profession. Researching historical background, maintaining the coherence of a project, and

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explaining its context to an audience has been one of the main tasks of the many production dramaturgs since the 1800s. For dramaturgs, managing the context is often akin to the process of translation. In dramaturgy, however, the concept of “translation,” like the concept of dramaturgy itself, has many meanings. It can mean literal (or literary) translation from one language to another. It can mean translating (adapting) a project from one medium to another (from film to theatre, from novel to theatre, from theatre to novel and film). During the process of new play development, it can also mean translating the world of the play between the playwright and the director. And finally, it can also mean translating the same world from the rehearsal room to the wider audience, through various audience outreach methods, program notes, lobby displays, social media, and other digiturgical tools.

Beatrice Basso, an American translator of Italian drama, once wrote that in the process of translating drama from one language to another, one must

live through two main phases: the linguistic translation and the transmutation of the physical /cultural essence of the piece into another culture. Sensitivity both to the linguistic issues of the original text and to the culture from which the play stems, is ... necessary to any translation aimed at production. ... The more the sociological and cultural aspects of a text are taken into consideration, the more you can trust the original writing and understand its tone.¹⁷

In addition to mastering the plays’ sociological, cultural, and linguistic context, one must capture their intricate musical structure: the rhythm and tonality of language. Just as she must seamlessly move between two languages and two cultures when focused on linguistic translation, the production dramaturg as the context manager must move between the different “languages of the stage,” to quote Patrice Pavis, or sometimes even between different art forms.¹⁸ Whether during linguistic translation, the new play development process, or adaptation, understanding and moving between two different contexts is an essential aspect of the dramaturgical experience. Katalin Trencsényi, Gitta Honegger, Jane Barnette, and Mark Bly analyze different strategies for contextualizing the world of the play as applied to various dramaturgical practices, from translation to adaptation to new play development.

The same ability that allows the dramaturgs to move between contexts permits them to move between different disciplines and artistic mediums. Part VI, “Dramaturgy among other arts: interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and transvergence,” provides an overview of dramaturgical practice as it’s applied to other artistic disciplines, including musical theatre, opera, dance, film, multimedia projects, interactive theatre, experimental works, new media, and video game design. Since dramaturgy concerns itself with the issues of dramatic structure, the dramaturgical tools and strategies used in theatre are transferable to other mediums that also rely on dramatic structure. In opera, Andrew Eggert notes, for example, “composers and producers have called on the knowledge and experience of a dramaturg – a knowledgeable theatre practitioner – to help give direction to the creative process” (p. 354, this volume). Likewise, dramaturgical research strategies are applicable to many other forms beyond live stage. To quote Gerry Potter, who writes about film dramaturgy, “As it is in

theatrical dramaturgy, research is a primary activity for screenwriters, directors, actors, designers, cinematographers, editors, composers, and craft departments in motion pictures” (p. 359, this volume). Increasingly, dramaturgs can be found working in new areas. In the latest developments, dramaturgy expands into the fields of new media, virtual worlds, and video game design, where structuring the user’s emotional experience is fundamental to the very process. As Klaus P. Jantke notes,

Dramaturgy is the design of emotional experience. For digital games that are intended to tell a story, game design includes the anticipation of the players’ experiences which will lead to excitement, fascination, thrill, perhaps to immersion and flow. What players will experience takes place over time. Events that happen are linearly ordered and those that may potentially happen form a partially ordered space, the game’s story space. Dramaturgical game design is the anticipation of varying experiences and their thoughtful arrangement in a partially ordered space of events that players may possibly experience when playing the game.

(p. 370, this volume)

Dramaturgy has concerned itself with structuring the emotional experience of the audience since its very beginnings. Starting from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, through Eugène Scribe’s concept of the “well-made play,” Gustav Freytag’s dramatic “triangle” (*Technique of the Drama*, 1863), and Layos Egri’s famous book, *The Art of Dramatic Writing* (1942), to the multitude of modern how-to guides, among which Jeffrey Hatcher’s *The Art and Craft of Playwriting* (2000) is one of the best-known, these dramaturg-playmakers attempt to provide the most reliable recipe for the well-designed dramatic structure. On the other end from the new play development process are production dramaturgs whose job is to break down already existent dramatic structures in order to translate the dramatic text into theatrical language. These dramaturgs have been developing different methods of play analysis for years, using Aristotle, Scribe, Egri, and others to unlock the playwright’s purpose behind the arrangement of dramatic events. The best-known modern play-analysis guides, such as David Ball’s *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays* (1983) and David Rush’s *A Student Guide to Play Analysis* (2005), however, concern themselves with classic, Aristotelian dramas, which rely on internally coherent dramatic structure (often based on the unity of time, space, and place), domino-like causality, and linear arrangement of events and characters which are consistent, realistic, and believable. Thus, many of these play development and play-analysis strategies are inadequate when faced with postdramatic dramaturgy of non-realist dramas, devised performances, and avant-garde multimedia works. Part VII, “Dramaturg as systems analyst: dramaturgy of postdramatic structures,” focuses on this long-neglected area of dramaturgical practice. The part opens with Gad Kaynar’s essay on “Postdramatic dramaturgy,” which delineates the challenges and issues involved in working with non-linear, anti-Aristotelian narratives. Further, the part includes some of the iconic essays on play analysis, like Elinor Fuchs’ legendary “EF’s visit to a small planet,” Tori Haring-Smith’s “Dramaturging non-realism,” and D. J. Hopkins’s “Research,

counter-text, performance,” as well as new articles by leading international dramaturgs working in new media, dance, and digital performance. Some of the methods of play development and analysis included in this part can apply to realist dramas, but all of them can also apply to postdramatic works that might not even have a dramatic text. This part also includes one older essay, Barbara Johnson’s “Teaching deconstructively,” first published in 1985. The essay has been staple reading in comparative literature and English departments, but it is barely known in theatre studies and performing arts courses. Yet the reading strategies provided by Johnson are very suitable for theatrical texts, particularly those whose dramatic structure is not easily discernable. As theatre moves towards a collaborative, devised model, developing works that reflect our current, global, mediated, and fragmented reality, new analytical tools will need to be developed.

Dramaturgical outreach

The final part, “Dramaturg as public relations manager: immersions, talkbacks, lobby displays, and social networks,” provides an overview of traditional dramaturgical outreach tools, like talkbacks and program notes, as well as the latest trends, including immersive dramaturgy, pre-show talks, lobby displays, production blogs, podcasts, preview videos, social media outreach, theatre apps, geo-turgy, photo-turgy, blogo-turgy, and tweeturgy. Miriam Weisfeld’s article on theatre lobby displays is the first essay ever published on the topic. As audiences demand more interactive, immersive experiences, lobby displays will become part of the dramaturgical process. Likewise, the revolution in online dramaturgy and social media creates unprecedented opportunities for dramaturgs to build online components into their traditional dramaturgical audience outreach. Some theatres, like the Oregon Shakespeare Festival or the National Theatre in London, have developed elaborate online educational sites to supplement their on-site outreach. The National Theatre, in fact, is one of the very first theatres to have an entire digital department devoted solely to developing and promoting the theatre’s online content. In October 2013, the National Theatre pioneered an app, specifically designed to commemorate their 50th anniversary. The app consists of an “extensive collection of content from a selection of fifty seminal productions, [f]eaturing exclusive content from the National Theatre’s archive,” including “an interactive timeline of production posters; hundreds of production and rehearsal photographs, costume illustrations, set designs, technical images, annotated scripts and other content from a selection of National Theatre productions; exclusive video interviews; [and] an overall introduction and an introduction to each production.”¹⁹ As more and more dramaturgs across the globe engage in online digiturgy, the future of dramaturgical outreach lies in mobile and context-driven search and networking technology. Dramaturgs should embrace these tools, as they can help the field to grow and further develop while expanding audience experience and making theatre more accessible and interconnected.

If there ever was a time for a profession to flourish, our new digital information age creates a perfect storm for the dramaturgical mode of analysis to dominate how

we process, shape, and structure the information overload. Although it initially grew out of theatre, contemporary dramaturgy has made enormous advancements in recent years, and it is now permeating all kinds of narrative forms and structures: from opera to musical theatre; from dance and multimedia to filmmaking, video game design, and robotics. The definition of dramaturgy is expanding and the concept is being redefined as we speak, as verb, skill, and function, to include many modes of making meaning. In our global, mediated context of multi-national group collaborations that dissolve traditional divisions of roles as well as unbend previously intransigent rules of time and space, the dramaturg is also the ultimate globalist: inter-cultural mediator, information and research manager, media content analyst, interdisciplinary negotiator, social media strategist. If the twentieth century can be called the century of the auteur director, the twenty-first century will be the century of the dramaturg.

Notes

- 1 Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 24.
- 2 Quoted in Joel Schechter, "In the Beginning There Was Lessing ... Then Brecht, Muller and Other Dramaturgs," in *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book*, eds. Susan Jonas, Geoffrey S. Proehl, and Michael Lupu (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College, 1997), 18, 16–24.
- 3 See W. Habicht, "Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Making of a Myth," in *Nineteenth-Century Germany, A Symposium*, eds. Modris Eksteins and Hildegard Hammerschmidt (Tübingen: Marr, 1983), 141–57; and W. Habicht, "The Romanticism of the Schlegel-Tieck Shakespeare and the History of Nineteenth-Century German Shakespeare Translation," in *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age*, ed. Lieven D'hulst and trans. Dirk Delabastita (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1992), 45–54.
- 4 Quoted in Schechter, 21.
- 5 Schechter, 22.
- 6 Mark Bly, *The Production Notebooks: Theatre in Process, Volume 2* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001), xv.
- 7 Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).
- 8 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 140.
- 9 Peter Szondi, *Theory of the Modern Drama*, ed. and trans. Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 10.
- 10 Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 30. (Emphasis author's).
- 11 Lehmann, 30.
- 12 Lehmann, 31.
- 13 Quoted in Craig Fleming, "CUI BONO? A Critique of the Conscripted Audience and, Perforce, a Manifesto," *HowlRound*, February 3, 2013, available online at www.howlround.com/cui-bono-a-critique-of-the-conscripted-audience-and-perforce-a-manifesto.
- 14 Jacqueline Olds and Richard S. Schwartz, *The Lonely American: Drifting Apart in the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 135.
- 15 Terry Teachout, "How Theatres Can Combat the Stay-at-Home Mindset," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 25, 2013, available online at <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304866904579266882201324884> (accessed December 25, 2013).

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- 16 Adrian Covert, "Marissa Meyer Reveals Yahoo's Big Plans for 2014," *CNNMoney Tech*, January 7, 2014, available online at http://money.cnn.com/2014/01/07/technology/marissa-meyer-ces-yahoo/index.html?hpt=hp_t2 (accessed January 8, 2014).
- 17 Beatrice Basso, "Italian Dramaturg in a Translation Process," *Theatre Topics* 13.1 (March 2003): 161, see also 162–3.
- 18 Patrice Pavis, *Languages of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of the Theatre* (New York: PAJ, 2001).
- 19 "50 Years of the National Theatre" [App], October 12, 2013, available online at <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/50-years-national-theatre/id720763482?mt=8> (accessed October 14, 2013).