

CTR Editors in Conversation: Mentorship, Collaboration and Invitation

Robert Wallace, Natalie Rewa, Ric Knowles, Laura Levin, and Jenn Stephenson

In an extension of our issue's theme of reassembly, we (co-editors Selena Couture and Melissa Poll) asked five former editors of *CTR* to join us in a roundtable conversation on 17 March 2026 by video conference. The five participants here are Robert (Bob) Wallace (script editor, 1981–1983; sole editor, 1983–1988; editorial contributor, 1988–1991); Natalie Rewa (co-editor with Alan Filewod, 1992–1995; member of editorial team, 1996–2004); Ric Knowles (co-editor with Alan Filewod, Harry Lane, and Ann Wilson, 1996–2004, 2004–2011); Laura Levin (Views and Reviews co-editor with Andy Houston, 2004–2010; sole editor, 2011–2016; associate editor, 2017–2023); and Jenn Stephenson (Views and Reviews co-editor with Natalie Alvarez, 2004–2011; sole editor, 2016–2022; associate editor, 2023–2025).¹ Collectively these five editors contributed to stewarding the journal for over forty years and represent a woven tapestry of editorial mentorship and training. The five people who participated in this roundtable come from several eras of editing *CTR*, each within highly distinct cultural and publishing landscapes.

We initially proposed the following discussion prompts: strategies for managing editorial responsibilities; reflections on feminist editing practices; the difficulties and solutions regarding publisher/editor funding dynamics; and their thoughts on the challenges facing editors of journals such as *CTR* today.

¹ Other editors of the journal include Don Rubin (1974–1982); Alan Filewod (editorial collective member, 1988–1992; co-editor with Natalie Rewa, 1992–1995); Jill Tomasson-Goodwin (book reviews editor); a University of Guelph–based editorial team consisting of Alan Filewod, Ric Knowles, Ann Wilson, Harry Lane, Alan Watts (1996–2004); and Heather Davis-Fisch (2023–2026). The current editor is Kim McLeod.

As you will see below, once the participants started sharing their knowledge of the history of the journal, a discussion quickly opened up about questions regarding the readership, practices of mentoring, and the importance of assembly both for editorial teams as well as guest editors and authors commissioned for themed issues. The editors reflected on the kinds of formal experimentation they encouraged and how such a vast list of contributors to the journal was created (some of whom were welcomed to publish materials in nontextual formats).

We are excited to share the edited transcript of this conversation, which recounts some little-known stories of early years of the journal as well as the feminist roots of the editorial choices that have had significant impact on the practice and scholarship of theatre in a Canadian context.

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Selena Couture (SC): Thank you all for coming. We're so glad to be in conversation with five former editors of *Canadian Theatre Review*. To begin, Natalie, you had a question you wanted to pose to Bob Wallace, or an invitation to Bob to speak about some of his experiences. . . .

Natalie Rewa (NR): Yes, my invitation is to open up the discussion by inviting Bob to remark on how he began editing four issues by himself. How did his knowledge of theatre and how it was evolving become the fabric of his approach?



Figures 1 & 2: Bio photo of Natalie Rewa from the time when she first began working with *CTR* (left) and her current photo (right).

Robert Wallace (RW): The way I remember it, the group of people that founded *CTR* in the early 1970s was unwilling or unable to continue working with the journal a decade later and, as a result, they began to invite others to join the editorial board with an eye to eventually taking over. At that time, the staffing of *CTR* depended largely on the Department of Theatre on the Keele campus of York University, about which I knew little as I was teaching at York's other campus (Glendon College) on the other side of Toronto.² To me, it seemed odd for Don Rubin, the founding editor of the journal, to ask me to solicit and edit play scripts, but I accepted his offer nevertheless, presuming he approached me because I had recently published a book with Cynthia Zimmerman (*The Work*, 1981), a collection of interviews with Canadian playwrights, and, years earlier, an article in *CTR* about a play of mine, *No Deposit No Return*, that was produced in New York in 1975. Although I knew him casually, our paths rarely crossed. Moreover, I knew nothing about editing journals let alone how to find and edit plays for publication.

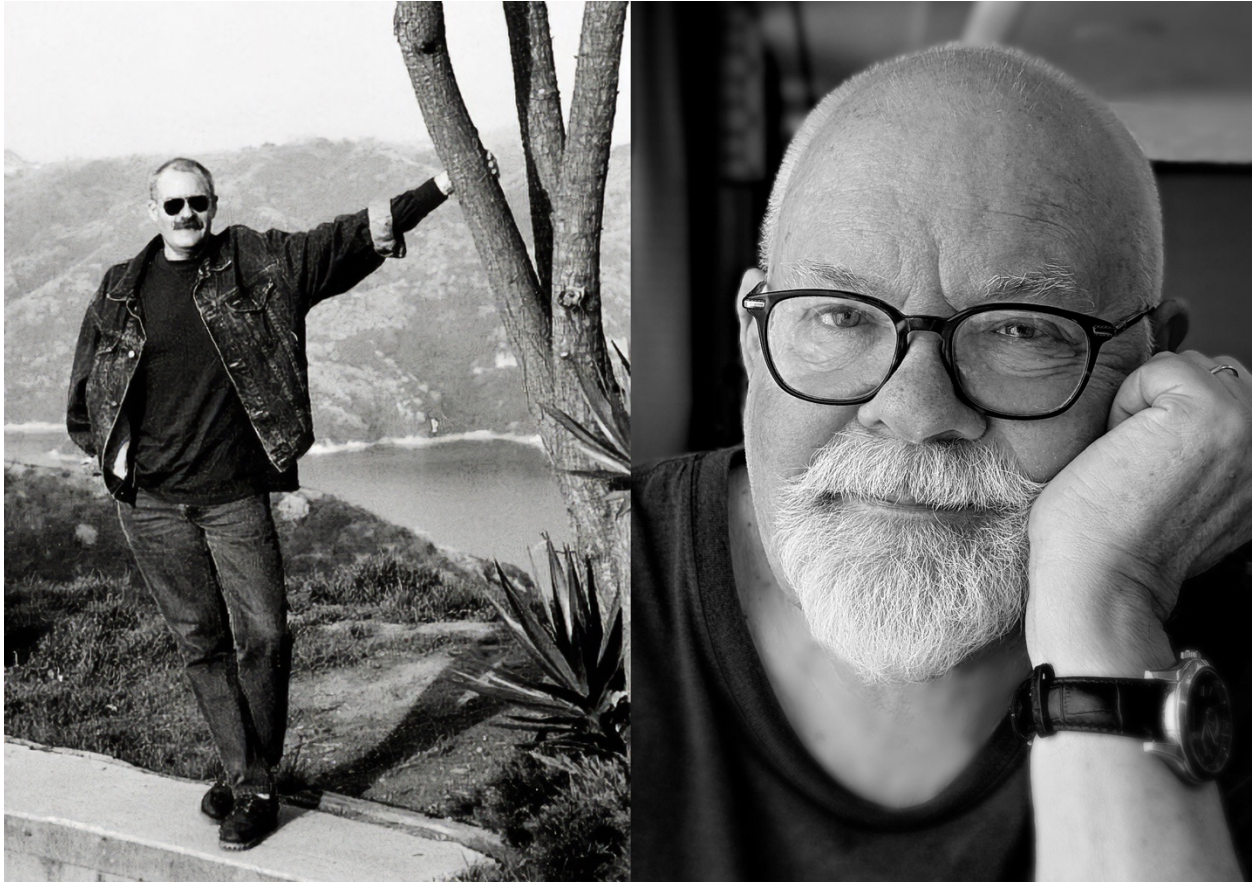
² Keele, the main campus of York University, is located in North York. York's bilingual Glendon campus is located in Midtown Toronto. York University campuses are located on the Toronto Purchase Treaty No. 13 lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the lands of the Anishinabek of the Williams Treaties First Nations. Both campuses are also situated on the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee.

When I began selecting scripts for the journal, I was pleased to discover it wasn't as difficult as I had expected, primarily because my connections in the Toronto theatre community and my engagement with emerging networks of Canadian playwrights such as PUC (Playwrights Union of Canada), of which I was a member, had led me to meet and hang out with theatre people. Still, almost immediately, I began to wonder, Who are these *CTR* scripts for? And why are we publishing any particular one? Did the journal publish scripts that wouldn't be published elsewhere, or did it compete for desirable scripts with other publishers? More importantly, perhaps, I wondered if we published certain types of scripts? Plays from across the country, perhaps, or conversely, ones from cities where theatres have given them major productions? Do we publish plays that haven't been produced and plays that will never be done, or do we publish only those that have been produced and become popular? Do we publish plays in translation? And what about radio scripts and screenplays? My questions continued to multiply.

In retrospect, I have to admit that what bothered me most was the lack of guidelines pertinent to my task. There was no protocol to follow in approaching writers and no format to use in presenting scripts—none that I was given, at any rate. In some ways this felt liberating because it allowed me to do what I wanted. But in other ways it was daunting. "Just go out there and find plays you think should be published and prepare them for the press." Ultimately, instructions such as these led me to interrogate not only what we published but for whom we wrote. In turn, these questions prompted me to wonder about the mandate of the journal. Who is *CTR* for? Who and where are our readers? Are we writing for a national readership of theatre artists and audiences or for a more general "arts" crowd? And, in either case, what do they want or need to read?

When I sought answers from others, especially the other editors, whom I rarely saw, I didn't receive much feedback. Although the journal listed an editorial Advisory Board on its masthead, I didn't meet any of its members in the ten or so years I spent with *CTR*. If the board convened during that time, I wasn't invited to a meeting. Quite quickly I concluded that I was tasked exclusively to find scripts that would fit the theme of the issue in which it would appear—a theme I was given without consultation. When I accepted the job, I decided it made sense to include the script of a play in a theatre journal. But now other concerns began to undermine my decision. A play isn't

necessarily theatre, is it? Nor is theatre necessarily a play. Is it necessary to publish a play because it will facilitate a production? How and why was I to justify my choices?



Figures 3 & 4: Robert Wallace from the time when he first began working with *CTR* (left) and his current bio photo (right).

SC: I'd like to pick up on that question: Who are we writing for? In the history of the journal, I don't know if anyone ever landed on any one answer. I think it's just been asked over and over again.

RW: I'm glad to hear that because the question is absolutely central to the vitality of the journal, in my opinion, even if answers fail to clearly emerge. How does anybody write anything if they don't know for whom they are writing? Who are our readers? What do we want them to know?

None of the editors at *CTR* addressed my queries, but they liked the scripts I chose well enough that I continued to do my job. Even when things began to fall apart—financially, I mean—which seemingly had nothing to do with me, I continued to submit my scripts on deadline, usually to Joe Green, who by then was the editor-in-chief or managing editor of the journal (his title kept changing . . .). Actually, Joe’s real title was Dean of Fine Arts, the York faculty that funded the journal, along with the Department of Theatre, from the very beginning. If it hadn’t been for their support, and the hard work of Joe and Don, *CTR* wouldn’t have come into existence and wouldn’t be around today.

SC: I’m glad you’ve brought up the issue of money and the publisher. This is key to how we’ve ended up publishing these articles about *CTR* in this *Performance Matters* issue.

I would really love to hear from the other editors about how, in their time as editors, they grappled with the question: Who are we writing for . . . who’s the audience? Or is it . . . who’s the audience [or readership] for each particular issue?

Laura Levin (LL): Thanks, Selena. Bob, we haven’t actually met in person, but it would be great to have a drink and bond about some York things since we both have worked there at different moments and on different campuses but, sadly, missed each other.

It’s so interesting how things change over time. My experience was very different from Bob’s. I was mentored into editing at *CTR* by Ric. I must have been around 27 years old when Ric generously invited me to come on as a review editor; I was very young, just out of grad school, and had a lot to learn. While I cycled through a bunch of different positions at *CTR* from 2006 to 2023 (first, review editor; then, associate editor; then, editor-in-chief), I had a really clear sense throughout this time about the audience our publication was talking to, and this came from Ric’s clear vision as editor-in-chief about *CTR*’s mandate. Ric always stressed that *CTR* was a publication that aimed to bridge artistic and scholarly communities in a meaningful and unique way. As junior editors, that goal was always front of mind: it was emphasized at all of our meetings; it was present in our Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council grant applications; and it informed how we made decisions about what content to include.

As part of this mandate, we were excited to be speaking about—and more importantly with—not a monolithic “Theatre Community” but a wide range of culturally diverse *performance communities*; we were trying to engage voices from historically marginalized groups who had not been given a platform to speak and whose theatrical work had largely not been spoken about. Jenn, you came in as editor shortly after me, and we worked together for years at *CTR*. Did you have a similar sense of this as the audience and focus as well? And Ric, if I have this wrong, please feel free to correct me!

Ric Knowles (RK): Yes, that’s right.



Figures 5 & 6: Laura Levin from the time when she first began working with *CTR* (left) and her current bio photo (right).



Figures 7 & 8: Ric Knowles from the time when he first began working with *CTR* (left) and his current bio photo (right).

Jenn Stephenson (JS): Laura, that's my experience; that's the genealogy from where I come in. I followed you, but I was mentored by Ric, because I was Views and Reviews co-editor with Natalie Alvarez around that time. And that was one of our preeminent thoughts. We continually asked, Who are we writing for? And it was this idea of bridging a traditional scholarly academic community and practising artists and writers and theatre makers. How successful *CTR* has been in talking to theatre makers has always been a question. This is something we grapple with. We say, this is what we want to do, this is our intention. We speculate on how successful we've been. I think it's an open question. Maybe some of that comes back to one of your provocations, Selena, about funding? About . . . about access? About what the journal costs and where and how it's available? I think there's always been this kind of dream . . . I heard it again recently . . . that *CTR* is available in every green room in the country. Well, even if it isn't, there's this idea we carry with us that it should be, or could be, or that we desire that, which I think is really fascinating. It's something we feel is part of our mission. And yet, I don't know if we've ever been really successful at cracking that. It's an interesting tension, I think, in thinking about readership. But it comes down to funding and who pays, and where *CTR* is being read. For those of us who are affiliated with institutions versus people who are outside of the confines of academia.



Figures 9 & 10: Jenn Stephenson from the time when she first began working with CTR (left) and her current bio photo (right).

LL: I remember there being a real tension around this, because there was this expectation that *CTR* would be sold in bookstores alongside popular magazines. We had to be careful about the theoretical language that was being brought into each of the issues because a lay reader also needed to be able to engage with the ideas in each article. And that was always a tricky dance: we had to figure out how to approach that as an editing problem—almost a dramaturgical problem. There’s a politics to editing in this respect. I would always find myself thinking about the funding and those buying the magazine, and wonder, for example, . . . Should I edit this Judith Butler or Deleuze out? Will this be too heady for the non-specialist reader? Is the author I’m editing getting too deep into the theory without sufficient explanation? Should I pull them back? On the other hand, if I’m editing the work of an emerging scholar who is working through these ideas for the first time, should I just let this author take pleasure in the theory . . . give them the time and opportunity to play with dense and dazzling ideas? I wanted *CTR* to be an encouraging space for doing that, as well as for introducing lay readers to political theory they might not encounter elsewhere. So, for me, this was a tricky aspect of editing to negotiate, and very tied to the question of funding and the very different audiences reading *CTR*.

Melissa Poll (MP): I'm here to listen but just wanted to add that in my career, I've been inside academia and back from being a performer . . . and the only time I had access to *CTR* was when I was at school. When I was a freelance artist, living pay cheque to pay cheque, I was interested in *CTR* and staying on top of what was happening in the Canadian theatre scene, but it just absolutely was not something that I could afford to buy.

JS: I just want to underscore this point about access. *CTR* has been very successful in expanding the base of writers. We very frequently have first-time writers. Not only emerging scholars but people who don't always think in writing. And so that's been really interesting. *CTR* has been a space for people who think in images, or who think in sound, or for whom writing 3,000 words in a chunk is not their main mode of expression. I think that's something where we have been able to create quite a bit of access. Less in terms of the readership, but more on the writer side, which is interesting.

NR: That last point, I think, is the one I'd like to speak to. The question of whether people were coming from a university, whether there was a lot of academic writing or whether potential contributors were working in an adjacent media was important for me. I found it very important to bring in people who, as Jenn mentioned, were not writers. And so, one of the elements that I thought was really interesting was when Monique Mojica was editing the First Nations issue [*CTR* 68]. Rebecca Belmore came by and proposed a "centrefold" as another kind of addition to the issue. And that was manageable. Such additions amplified whose voice is going to be loud, and present, and present in a *public* way. I think that was what guided *CTR* creating a new space for itself. Similarly, as a guest editor [*CTR* 152], Laura accepted my proposal to break from the convention of a play script and to feature François Barbeau's visual essay of the dramaturgical materiality in his costume design for Cirque du Soleil.

SC: Ric, do you want to talk about your editorial stance?

RK: I think Laura . . . already did. I . . . I should acknowledge, first of all, that the person who brought me into *CTR* was Bob. He got me to edit an issue in 1986, I think. And I appreciated that. And I actually think that Bob's tenure at *CTR* was the time when we best reached theatre practitioners. I think that that

was a glory time for *CTR* having the capacity to do what I always thought it should do, which is bridge that gap that Laura talked about, between practitioners and theorists. And I feel like I've spent my life trying to do that in all kinds of fields.

So, yes, the other piece was that *CTR* has always led various, I don't want to call them trends, but shifts in discourse, going from nationalism in its earliest issues through regionalism. . . . Bob brought me in to do an issue on Atlantic Canada—through regionalism, to a focus on other kinds of communities that were not geographically based. One of the things that I tried to do was to pick up on what Natalie did. She edited the first issue on what was then called "ethnicity." I tried to push off from that into doing special issues on different cultural communities, as well as including people from different cultural backgrounds in all issues. I tried to do one special issue a year on a specific cultural community. And I tried to do one issue a year on a professional concern, whether it was lighting design, or directing, or process, translation, whatever, to try to reach different communities with different issues, as opposed to reaching all communities with all issues. I think it was, to a degree, successful in the sense that it met those communities as writers. I'm not sure whether it met them as readers.

RW: If I could just jump in here for a minute, I think it's important to emphasize what you and all of us have said in various ways, which is we're writing for different people and different communities. My question was, Who are we writing for? Obviously, it can't be answered the same way in every issue. I'm sure there are a number of people who wonder why we have "theme" issues in the first place—issues in which we organize articles in relation to particular topics or foci. This approach was evident to me from my earliest involvement with the journal. Certainly, the early editors, particularly Don, strove to organize the issues that way. But, by 1984, I think that approach had shifted somewhat. The thematic approach was becoming more problematic because it had built-in expectations that weren't necessarily those of our readers, we were discovering. In any particular issue, there were the expectations of (maybe) a small group of readers like theatre practitioners, and it was probably thrilling to them to read articles about lighting, to use Ric's example, but maybe not others.

I guess what I'm getting at here is a larger question: To what degree is the journal free to say, okay, this particular issue ISN'T for everyone? This issue is for theatre technicians. This one is for playwrights. This issue will appeal mainly to performance theorists. This one's for people who are interested in nonverbal communication on the stage. This one is for. . . . We could go on. We could build so many silos we wouldn't know on what farm we were working.

CTR can't be everything for everybody. A journal, like a magazine or a book, has to pursue an identity. Its editors must determine not only who they're writing for but what they want their readers to know or think about. What are we driven to communicate?

Personally, I can't write about anything much anymore. I mean, I know so little about so little. Ironically, that's what I would write about if anyone wanted to read it. [Laughs.] But they don't. [Laughs again.] People who know about everything, I don't know where they are, but if they want to write for *CTR*, that would be fine. Okay, I'm being silly, but I think you get my point. . . .

So another question emerges: How do we find our writers? How do we look for them? Well, I think we find them by searching for them everywhere, all the time; certainly, this was what I did when I found myself gathering a clutch of writers once I became the journal's sole editor in the mid-eighties. Of course, I looked to the theatre community first—to people working in theatre. I didn't seek out theoreticians or historians but rather sought practitioners, or I tried to. Theatre makers. Actors, directors, designers. And along with them, I added a few theatre critics and academics. And for a while, this seemed to work.

Now? Well, I'm not sure if it works anymore or not. Everything seems more splintered these days, more dispersed. I mean, the world is more obviously splintered or we experience it that way. Now I think we can afford to say, "We do this, only this. We didn't do that then. We won't be doing that tomorrow." As a result, the question shifts to, What is this thing, *CTR*? What is it now? Not just who are we writing for, but who are we and where are we at? What is this time, this epoch? And how does it compare to the seventies and eighties? Even the nineties.

JS: One of the things I want to underscore when thinking about *CTR* is that it is thematic. When you think about what we have all done collectively over the decades, it is kind of amazing. *CTR* is a journal that is uniquely thematic every time. There are no general topic issues. And related to what we've been talking about, the readership for every issue is unique. And there's all these little pods of specialists who read a particular themed issue. And maybe there's some people who read every issue. And so, the readership is always new. But the writers are also very frequently new. One of the things we do as editors is that we're always coaching new contributors. On top of that, the fact that every issue has a unique theme, that means we'll be bringing in guest editors, so the editors are new, too. When you think about the complexity and the risk of editing a journal this way, it's actually kind of outlandish.

RW: Yes.

JS: But it's . . . I don't know, I think it's part of the charm of what we've tried to do over the years. The contributor list is vast. Because of this commitment I inherited from Laura, who inherited from Ric, who inherited from . . . I don't know where this idea originated. I think it's kind of great, but it really informs the work that we did as editors.

RW: Which is. . . .

JS: . . . a lot of coaching, and shepherding, and managing, and, and being okay with people who don't know. And it creates so much idiosyncrasy across the issues, and wild swings of voice and tone. I kind of love it. But it is actually absurd.

LL: I agree, Jenn. There's something beautiful about gathering small groups of people who are passionate about a particular topic. The thematic issues helped to build community . . . sometimes vibrant micro-communities formed through building discourse around particular topics.

Just to give one example: I co-edited an issue on Jewish performance with Belarie Zatzman, a colleague of mine at York. Belarie was an expert in this area; I was not. But as a Jewish woman who had never thought about the way in which my identity intersected with the practice that I loved, theatre, it was

incredible to have the opportunity to spend time over the course of two years talking with people passionate about where these two things intersect. And it was helpful for the artists making work in this space to be engaging with other scholars thinking deeply about Jewishness in relation to performance, sometimes because they hadn't previously thought about their work in this way and sometimes because it opened up a space for debating what "Jewishness" even means now and in an art context. The issue made community because it was a moment in time where a bunch of people came together to see themselves as a "we," to pause and ask: Wait, what is it that we are doing and why does it matter?

I think we could see this with so many other field-defining issues, like Moynan King's edited issue on queer women and trans artists' performance [*CTR* 149]. Moynan saw the issue as an opportunity to bring together a group of artists who needed to think together about the interventions they were making and had already made in changing the hetero and gender normative face of performance in Canada.

As an aside, it is worth noting that curated conversations—where editors assembled artists to collaborate on a published dialogue around a particular theme—were an important part of thematic issues, and Moynan set the bar high for these. She organized a conversation among ten-plus women and transartists, staged in Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue's Feminist Art Gallery (FAG). The room she created for that dialogue was filled with emotion, laughter, and excitement, as many of these artists had worked together for years, while others were mutual fans and meeting each other for the first time. The discourse started there within this group spilled out in the years beyond it into other articles, books, and cabarets, leading to many meaningful collaborations. This also reminds me of the raucous and joyful launch parties that we organized to launch many *CTR* issues. These were other moments where issues led to public assembly which in turn led to community formation.

I would love to find a way to trace some of these kinds of events and their impacts. How did *CTR* make possible not only forms of community but new directions in people's lives and careers? Publishing in *CTR* has helped emerging authors to think about going to grad school. Publishing scripts here helped dramatic texts to be read by theatre companies and later get staged

in vibrant productions (e.g., Darrah Teitel's *Corpus* in *CTR* 153). We could trace these impacts in a more concerted way.

NR: Just a very short comment about tapping into “invisible” communities that have far-reaching implications. This is also about rethinking how geographies are remapped: Toyoshi (Yoshi) Yoshihara, who translated Canadian plays into Japanese for Japan, was in Vancouver.³ Initially, he said, no, no, I’m a translator, I don’t write. He began thinking about this possibility and spoke to someone who confirmed that he ought to write. So, this was a case of *CTR*’s editorial community spreading invisibly and making such contributions significant.

MP: I just have to chime in on this. *CTR* helped me build and reinforce my feminist communities. Natalie Alvarez edited my first piece for Views and Reviews, and then I went on and I worked with Keren Zaiontz and Peter Dickinson (who’s also a fierce feminist). Later, I worked with Karen Fricker, who had been my PhD supervisor, so it not only created a community for me, but it brought me back to my feminist community. I was so inspired by all of the powerful women and people that I got to work with and be mentored by at *CTR*.

JS: Natalie, I absolutely recognize that experience of persuading people who didn’t want to write, that really, we wanted to hear from them, and that this was possible, and we would figure out a way. And maybe we could do an interview, or they could do a collage, or they could do something else. And so, that experience resonates with me. This also included persuading people I didn’t even know to write. I would contact people I did know, and I would say, I don’t want you to write for this issue, but who do you know? Who’s in your circle? Who are you working with these days? And so, again, so many unknown, or as-yet-unknown voices came into *CTR* through our editorships, I think that was important.

NR: Could I just add, I think one of the interesting aspects of theatre activity is that there are communities and people who were doing work that wasn’t part of a runway. And one of those was the Labrador Integrated Arts Festival

³ Toyoshi (Yoshi) Yoshihara went on to translate over fifty Canadian plays, establish Maple Leaf Theatre in Tokyo, and was invested into the Order of Canada in 2013. Yoshihara published articles in *CTR* 85 and 179.

in Goose Bay that I attended, where small groups of children and their teacher—the size of the cast was governed by the seats on the small planes flying in Labrador—wrote and performed their own plays for the other participants. The performances and workshops during the festival were dynamic. I contacted Tim Borlase to ask for an update on the goings-on in Nain. His article reflects the activity of the festival several years later.⁴ So that elasticity of curating an issue, giving space to that kind of work, given the geography of the country, remains important to me. The assembly of an issue was linked to a perception of the journals that were active in the period—to consider how *CTR* adds vocabularies to the discourses.

RK: We've been talking about getting people to write. I think one of the things that *CTR* did, uniquely in my experience of editing more academic journals where it's quite different, was getting people to *edit* issues of *CTR* who would never have been an editor, to bring them on board as a co-editor and work with them, teach them to edit, if you like. But give them the opportunity, and give ourselves access to their knowledge. The one for me that I was proudest of was Djanet Sears. Now, Djanet ended that experience saying, I'll never edit again. But she did one issue about a topic that she was very passionate about! I do think that's an important thing that I think all of you have done. We have all worked with co-editors that probably would never have edited a journal in their lives.

JS: We handed over the whole issue to complete newbies, which is amazing! This is great! But, very much not the usual thing.

LL: Yeah it felt like we were taking real risks here. The best kind of risks.

RK: It was three times as much work for us as editing those issues ourselves would have been.

LL: It was.

JS: I remember once, an issue fell out of sequence, and Laura, you and I stepped in, and we knocked it out in, like, six months. We could move that

⁴ "Coming to Our Senses: Notes from the Labrador Creative Arts Festival," *CTR* 56. Tim Borlase and Noreen Heighton were the co-founders of the Labrador North Creative Arts Festival in 1975.

quickly because we had done it before. But that's not typical. We took the hard way around, Ric, absolutely, by giving the keys to the kingdom to people for whom that was not their experience.

LL: But that's also a feminist practice. It's an anti-gatekeeping approach. At some journals, an editorial team might ask, Does this person have the academic chops or the editing experience to write about this particular topic? Instead, we took big risks on artists who we felt had something important to say, whether or not that they had the "proven" editing or writing background. We were working against these patriarchal and elitist ideas of expertise that had been around for so long and that would have kept so many of us out—kept us out of publishing spaces and rooms where we had something to contribute and could help to shift and deepen the conversation.

And Ric, you were talking about the invisible labour that the editors were doing in mentoring new writers and editors. That's also a kind of feminist support, right? As an editor, you make the decision to say, "My job is to create the conditions that let *you* shine in what you're doing. I'll sit back and support you in taking the lead as first-time writers and emerging editors." We had language for this: we called this "shadow editing." It meant: I will commission this fabulous artist to be the lead editor on an issue, and I will be there in the wings—not as a named lead on the issue, but as backup—to offer support if anything tricky comes up. We were on standby if there were questions about journal protocols, if a guest editor needed advice about what curatorial direction to take, or if they needed backup in dealing with a difficult writer or something like that. We were *accompanying* them, offering our experience, but otherwise giving them space to dream, take big risks, and take the spotlight.

Sometimes this feminist editing practice involved "shadow" editing and sometimes co-editing, because editing with another person—a full collaboration on an issue—can also be an excellent site for mutual support and mentorship. But fundamentally, the point was to lend support so that a person who hadn't had the experience of editing before could jump in and do it, or so that a leader within a particular community or area of professional artistic practice would be centred as the person to steer the ship on a

particular theme. I really value this approach even if, as you say, Jenn, it was scary and sometimes the results were mixed!

JS: Yeah. If you look at the issues over time, they're wildly uneven. I don't mean that as a kind of a negative quality thing. They're different. And that's great! Maybe back to Bob's original point, the journal is not one thing, it's a thousand things. Under this one umbrella.

RW: I'd like to insert a bit of personal information here, if I may. In 1987, my partner and I moved to Montreal for two years. And I was still editing the journal, most issues, trying to find guest editors for others. I introduce this because I was invited to work with the editors of *Jeu* for the duration of my stay in Montreal, the group that edits that wonderful theatre journal.⁵ And when I say I worked with them . . . well, actually, it would have been great if I could REALLY have worked with them, but in fact, my French was so miserable, I couldn't. I was in Montreal to learn French as much as to learn about Le Théâtre québécois . . . the names of artists, québécois artists, critics, like the members of *Jeu*. . . Anyway, my experience at *Jeu* allowed me to connect with more theatre people, a NEW group, writers and editors who worked differently than I did. It was a revelation.

There were as many as twelve people who would gather at a large table in the workspace at CEAD [Le Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques] for an editorial meeting, let's say. . . . This could be an impromptu meeting or a once a week date, but definitely it happened at least once a month, usually on a Sunday. And the talk was pretty wild, meaning it was very open but intuitively organized. Each of us appeared to represent different perspectives and different attitudes. . . . And there were tensions among people beyond just linguistic ones. Yet everyone was interconnected in their sense of what they were creating, and why. Now, that had a big impact on me. And the manner by which they created it changed the way I felt about editing when I returned to Toronto in 1989. And it changed my career. For one thing, I left *CTR* in 1991 or so . . . which means, ultimately, I was only with the journal for about a decade—a period of considerable change.

⁵ Bob is referring to the Quebec-based quarterly francophone journal *JEU: revue de théâtre*. For more information see their website: revuejeu.org/.

I loved working at *Jeu*, despite feeling inadequate much of the time. I loved the back-and-forth communication, the give and take, the explosion of energy that could blast open a meeting unexpectedly. Sometimes, you know, as with any group of people, some of us would be affected emotionally by current events and personal involvements, by language, past history, relationships. What I'm getting to, I guess, is that the world would enter our meetings along with the topics and concerns of the theatre we were gathered to discuss. I didn't have that at *CTR*, where I mainly worked alone or on the telephone. And as much as I scrambled to work with writers from across the country, I ultimately found only four or five who could commit to writing for the journal on a regular basis. Ric, you were one of them.

My experience at *Jeu* changed my whole attitude to how I thought a journal could be run, so much so that in 1989, or whenever it was—Natalie, you possibly remember the year—I decided I was going to move on, to leave the journal to others. I was burning out for a number of reasons. I invited Natalie and Anne Wilson and Alan Filewod, committing to stick with them for a year or two, and the four of us were going to be a little collective, in my mind, like the group at *Jeu*. Now, we did achieve something of that feeling, but not a lot. We met a couple of times a year to discuss how the journal was progressing and to project what we wanted to do with it over the next eighteen months. We brought our hobby horses to bear on, you know, what each of us would like to edit, and it was good, but it was only the four of us, and I think, Natalie, you could speak to this probably better than I can. [Natalie nods.]⁶ I mean, we were all very busy, just like you guys. It was difficult to organize a meeting. At least there's Zoom now. We only had the telephone, and we made good use of calls, and we held a few meetings in my house around the dining room table, and, you know. . . .

Jeu has a whole building, and they WORK there, together. They publish their own journal and, as I see it . . . they make it themselves. I mean, production really is that tangible, the connection between what they write and what they publish, HOW they publish. When I left *CTR*, I was . . . hoping this would happen with our new group. I think perhaps I edited two more issues over

⁶ Further response ... Natalie nods and says: Bob did bring this energy back with him to Toronto, and I too experienced some of the public contributions made by the *Jeu* team in Montreal. At one of the early World Stage Festivals in Toronto (Harbourfront), he organized a panel and invited me as a panellist.

one or two more years. But slowly, it . . . well, you tell me. You tell me how it evolved from there, because it changed, right? And I don't know where it's at today.

So when I ask, who are we writing for, how do we find our writers, what is it that we choose to write about, the answers come down to you and the people you find to work with, the ones you bring in. I don't know who they are anymore, who you are, if I'm being honest. If I was to walk into a room where you are—not a virtual room like this one—if it was the first time for all of us to meet—like my first meeting at CEAD, a room filled with people I didn't know, where I didn't know what to expect—what would happen? I knew most of their names, I knew a little bit about them but I, you know. . . .

How does a group integrate and interact? How do you pull it all together? Because I think that space (where we work) and the act of piecing the journal together determines how it evolves. You fill it with your ideas, your presence even, you feed it, you make it come alive. So to hear you talk about your successes is great; it's a real education to me, and I'd like to hear more.

JS: I want to tell you, Bob, that exactly . . . what you're describing, of getting together at someone's house for dinner and planning the next eighteen months, we still do that. Exactly.

RW: Well, I'm glad.

JS: But what we did learn was that the group had to be a lot bigger than four people. We needed closer to eight.

RW: Yes, definitely.

JS: To keep it going and not burn people out, but I'm telling you, plus ça change. . . .

RW: That's great.

RK: The story is different for me. For a few years, a group of us at Guelph—Alan Filewod, Harry Lane, Alan Watts, Ann Wilson, and I—worked as an editorial collective. But eventually the editorship devolved onto me. So it

went the other direction. And I found it . . . easier, and more stimulating to work with not the same group of people all the time. Not that there was anything wrong with working with the group of us that we had. But we all got to know one another too well. I found bringing in guest editors, after that experience, more exciting. And it's another piece of what my experience of editing *CTR* was, that again, unlike other journals, where one edits to one's strengths, I think I edited to my weaknesses. I'd propose an issue because I didn't know anything about it. And it was a chance to find out about it.

RW: That takes guts.

SC: This discussion about collaboration and invitation, and how that supported your editorial passions, aligns with our editorial practice in republishing these articles. Because we are in a significant moment of crisis of academic publishing in theatre in Canada, we wanted to invite many people into the discourse. Our editing of this *Performance Matters* issue is one way of addressing the crisis.

Kim Solga, Nicole Nolette, and Karen Fricker are approaching other aspects of the crisis with other methods of organizing. They all involve assembling—in different ways—including the roundtable at the CATR [Canadian Association for Theatre Research] conference in Victoria this summer. How do we face this crisis? Well, we need to assemble and then we need to reassemble and remind each other who's here, who cares about this, and what can we each contribute to learning and moving forward from this.

LL: Bob, it's incredible to hear that some of that energy of coming together as an editorial collective came from you and those experiences you wanted to bring to *CTR* from *Jeu*. That's really moving. Ric, you say you were moving away from that approach by focusing on bringing on guest editors as another model, but I certainly felt like I was part of a really close-knit team when I was brought in as an editor. The kindness that you, Anne, Catherine, Harry, and Andy showed me was extraordinary. The closeness within the editorial team intensified over the years and often through really remarkable, informal meet-ups. I remember having the editors over to my house for at least a meal or two; we would talk about the journal and the field for hours—often late into the night. Heather Davis-Fisch left my house after 3:00 a.m. one

morning. We also had these meetings at CATR conferences each year. I have vivid memories of sessions over meals, sometimes at bars.

I want to honour what Bob and Jenn were saying about how deeply important these moments of assembling are for publishing and editing. These moments I'm describing really felt to me like a feminist practice of gathering. They were spaces where we could be humans with each other, where we could let down our professional guards and get to know each other better. I was having children during this period and going through so much: learning how to be a mother, an editor, a professor . . . all these different things. When Heather stayed at my house until late at night, we were talking about becoming parents, the joys and real challenges of that messy period of life. These kinds of networks of support and care were instrumental to the experience of editing at *CTR*. So, maybe we didn't call ourselves a collective, but that's what I felt that we were.

Selena, you were talking about the moment that we're in right now, and that Nicole, Karen, and Kim will invite us to come together at CATR this year to talk about how we assemble and show up for each other and at difficult moments. I think that is a terrific idea. It feels especially important as we are seeing the erosion of spaces for assembly—which might sound weird because digital media has made it easier to gather in some ways.

Something fell apart during the COVID-19 pandemic—in a general sense in terms of interpersonal relationships, but also within our field. We haven't found a way to address this. CATR was a vital place for people in our field to meet. Then there was at least one year where we couldn't do this because of the pandemic risks. The conference shifted online. And later it would return to being in person but there was also an online component. Some of these developments are really important for accessibility reasons. At the same time, it has felt like fewer and fewer people have been attending both online and in person, and few people were coming for the whole conference; they just drop in to one or two sessions. We need to rebuild spaces to speak collectively and thoughtfully about what has been going on in the field—whether we are talking about what happened with the censored article, or what has been happening with budget cuts in departments across the country, or. . . .

When I mentioned some of these things at CATR in Regina last year, people were like, What's going on? There is a kind of splintering happening within the community that we need to address not only in relation to publishing but also in relation to theatre and performance studies more broadly. Where do we gather and talk about situations that are urgent for theatre makers and scholars? How do we collectively give support for scholars like Melissa working in the context of the US? We should see our futures as deeply enmeshed and be building much wider networks of support locally and transnationally. Now more than ever we need venues like *CTR* and CATR to bring us together to talk through this stuff as a community (and as many, many *communities* within a community).

RW: Yeah, I mean, ultimately, it makes sense, too. Theatre is . . . community, ideally. That's what it's always been about. If we want to write about theatre communities across the country but are unable to work together as a community, we're out of sync somehow.

JS: True.

RW: I'm not saying that's happening. But like you, Laura, I think it has to be re-emphasized, reprioritized.

LL: I think "out of sync" is the right way to put it. Something feels out of sync.

NR: If I could I just interject . . . on feeling out of sync, there's a sense by which whatever is the thematic issue takes the spotlight for the moment and then the larger community across the country doesn't hear itself doing itself. This has to do with the way the journal is structured, and where livestreaming fits in with copyright and archival access.

In the last two years *Opera Canada* journal has returned to their practice of publishing who's doing what, where in which province. This may be a way of finding some "sync."

RK: I was wondering when we might start talking about the way the journal is structured. It used to include the listings of who's doing what, where in the journal's very earliest days, and I remember when it stopped and I missed it. But I do think the structure is quite interesting. The articles, the script, and

the . . . its various titles, Views and Reviews, Carte Blanche, or whatever it's been over the years. But that three-part structure is something . . . I don't remember, in all the time I was involved with *CTR*, ever questioning it. Should we?

LL: Absolutely, there is still some reverence to the articles + script structure. At the same time, I think that this structure *was* questioned in some ways. During my time at *CTR*, there was a lot of play with form. Sometimes we published scripts, but we also sought out other dynamic formats to disrupt what was expected here: a costume portfolio, photo portrait series, performance recipes, audio tours, manifestos. . . . I loved the issue that I co-edited with Barry Freeman where authors helped us to stage *CTR*166 as a Wrecking Ball (following the Volcano Theatre's political cabaret format) with multiple short, humorous performance interventions. The issues that took the biggest risks with form were often the most interesting, and the ones that showcased the most exciting writers. That said, I agree that it would be great to keep pushing in the area of form and issue structure.

RK: I agree. What's interesting about those issues is that—and every issue could do this—is that the structure of the issue could be determined by the theme.

NR: Absolutely! Absolutely! I have felt that for a long, long time.

SC: I'm wondering if there's anything else any of you would like to discuss about issues we're facing currently?

JS: I want to say thank you to you, Selena, and thank you to everybody, because, you know, I was one of the co-editors of the fiftieth anniversary issue that has been dismembered. And so I came into the call feeling kind of sad. It's hard, it's really. . . . My feelings about *CTR* are really raw at the moment. So, this has been really good for me. This has been a really, really good, good conversation to gather with, you all, who . . . are my ancestors. I mean that in a nice way. No, it feels really good to be part of this lineage and to be in community with all of you at this moment, which really feels really heavy for me, so it's really good. Thank you.

NR: I think I would like to address the chilling effect of the dismembering of the issue. I did write to the press about this, especially since I recall other instances of navigating content.

SC: I think that there were nine months of negotiations, at least, if not more. . . .

JS: A lot of work was done. A lot.

SC: Yeah, this is also part of the sadness and the rawness, I think, that, Jenn, you're speaking to.

RW: Can you explain to me what you are talking about? I'm not sure what this . . . conflict is.

JS: So, in a nutshell. . . . So the fiftieth anniversary issue, which was co-edited by Heather Davis-Fisch and me and Seika Boye, contained an article with which a reader disagreed.

RW: Yes, I read it.

SC: And to explain further . . . after the editors received a complaint, many solutions were proposed and negotiations ensued over many months, until the directors of the press chose to remove the article. Nine other articles were rescinded to object to that decision.⁷

RW: It's really unfortunate what happened. You know, I suppose the journal almost fell apart when Don left. Would it have if it weren't for the work of Joe Green? Really, in the 1980s, Joe saved *CTR* by selling it to the press. But there were strings attached, as always. [Long sigh.] I wasn't involved in the discussions about the sale, so I don't know what Don or other people had to say, but I do know that York's new Dean of Fine Arts (Prof. Lionel Lawrence) was crucial to the negotiations because money was an issue. *CTR* was broke, bankrupt, Joe said, when he explained that the press had offered to buy it. As he told me then, they only wanted the journal if it had an editor who knew the

⁷ See the introduction to this issue for more context.

ropes, which meant they wanted me because no one else who had worked on the journal still wanted the job. I mean, all the main players had quit. As Joe put it, “They’ll buy us, you know, it’ll be a good deal for them and for us, but only if you agree to stay on—at least for a while. . . . Will you do it?”

I wasn’t exactly ambivalent when I answered him, but I hesitated nonetheless. Still I said yes because I believed in the journal, though I wondered how I’d manage to edit it on my own—at Glendon, without secretarial help and few resources. But to be honest, once I made the commitment, I already had begun to think of people I could approach for help if I could survive the job solo for a while. And, you know, I’m not sorry I did because, look, *CTR* is still here. I must emphasize, though, that I didn’t know anything about the press when I took the job and, to be frank, I still don’t. I have had no dealings with them over the years.

In fact, the first meeting I had with the press wasn’t with anyone from its administration but with Beth Earl, who became Beth Earl Rose, the designer of the magazine. It was with Beth that I changed the format of *CTR* from journal to magazine size. This was her suggestion, and I was thrilled by it, for it allowed us to introduce a more extensive use of photographs, which I had always wanted to do partially because of my admiration of *Jeu*, whose editorial approach relies heavily on images, and not just for illustration. And, as I said, Beth and I worked well together. Really, she ignited my desire to continue with the journal because I could see in her design skills the quality of the products edited by the press and the care it took with editing. Working with Beth, I knew the journal could improve—its look, at least—because of her aspirations to make it a visual success, a showpiece even. She provided creative ways to incorporate the images I gave her. We collaborated well and the press left us completely to ourselves, as far as I know.

There was absolutely no intervention, no control that I was aware of. Nobody demanded anything of me, though Beth enforced some design rules that probably were her own. The press left us alone, or so it seemed to me then.

I’m terribly sorry to learn what the editors are going through. It’s very sad. Reprehensible. Wrong.

LL: This issue feels particularly hard because we are feeling chilling effects against free speech on so many fronts. Many of our colleagues in the US are being made to censor their syllabi because they're too feminist. The anti-EDI [DEI in the US] police are scanning for particular words or anything that seems vaguely aligned with progressive social justice critiques. This is also a moment when protestors at many Canadian universities are being silenced for speaking out about human rights issues internationally. As painful as it has been to see how things have unfolded with respect to the article in question, at least this moment of censorship is bringing many of us in the community together to have these kinds of conversations, and we haven't been able to experience this for the last couple of years. . . .

SC: One of things to consider is that *Performance Matters* is an online and open source journal, so there's a considerable irony to republishing these works here now, and particularly the work which received the complaint, in a journal that's going to be open source and no longer behind a paywall. The censored article will actually be more accessible to more people than it was even in the original issue.

Although it is primarily an online journal, *Performance Matters* has recently added the option to "print on demand." One of our visions—and this is related to the assembling and reassembling we spoke of earlier—is to encourage people to print this copy of *Performance Matters* and attach it to the issue of CTR199–200 that was disassembled. The articles that are being republished are the articles as originally edited, with the addition of the responses. A big part of our desire to do this work is to honour the editorial work that you did.

MP: I feel like we're doing this in partnership with the CTR199–200 editors. Selena and I have always thought that this work is to honour them, and those authors that chose to rescind their articles, and to make something new. And expand it, but we . . . played a lot with this act of feminist reassembly. I'm vibing on the recognition of assembly right now. Thank you to Bob.

SC: So, I think we probably should wind up. I just want to say thank you so much. I love that this was a conversation. It went in directions that we couldn't have anticipated. I learned a lot, and I really appreciate your time so much.

MP: Thank you so much for your generosity. This is . . . this has held me up during some really hard times in the US. In the classroom, we feel very limited in what we can say, so I speak often about Canada. I talk about women's health care; I talk about our freedom of speech; I talk about social safety nets. I'm just so inspired and, and grateful, to be involved in this conversation. You're lovely, gracious people, and I'm lucky to know you.

LL: Thank you so much.

JS: And I will see some of you in Victoria in May, in person.

LL: Yay! Bob, I'm serious about getting that drink! I'm so sorry I missed you at York.

RW: Thanks to everybody for including me in this discussion. I was sort of surprised to be invited. Actually, I didn't think I would have much to say after all these years but, as always, I ended up speaking far too much. So . . . thank you.

LL: I learned a lot.

SC: You added a crucial piece around the drive to assemble. I think that's really key. . . .

RK: Thank you for including me, too, as the dead hand of the past.

RW: You look lively to me—even on my tablet.

NR: This has been a stimulating discussion, which, I think, has been really important, and maybe even theatrically cathartic. So, thank you. Farewell, and all the best to all.

JS: Good to see you, Natalie. Bye-bye.

LL: Bye, Natalie.

SC: Alright, everybody. Take care, good night.

LL: Nice seeing all of you. Bye.

RW: Good night. How do I turn this off?