This issue focuses on theatre history, and the authors show ability to rethink what went on and/or may be outcomes of Asian performances owing to the political and economic demands of the period. The play *Cry to Heaven* (2007) by Nick Rongjun Yu, which is translated and introduced by Shiao-ling Yu, was presented as part of the hundredth anniversary of Chinese huaju. I believe it will appeal to those who teach the history of spoken drama to students. Not only does it present significant figures of huaju in ways that humanize their ideas, but also it is an interesting study in cross-cultural appropriation. The play reminds us that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (rarely staged in today’s politically correct America because of its association with black face and stereotypes) is alive and fighting for freedom of speech in contemporary China!

Siyuan Liu’s article “Paris and the Quest for National Stage in Meiji Japan and Late-Qing China” shows how political forces gave birth to national (and nationalistic) theatre movements in both Japan and China from the 1870s. This article explains part of what made *Black Slave’s Cry to Heaven* (1907) such a politically important experiment when it premiered with its Chinese student cast a hundred years ago. Lui shows that French artistic choices in response to the Franco-Prussian war helped model first Japanese and then Chinese theatre practice. Theatre building was nation building.

Articles by Kevin Wetmore Jr. (“1954: Selling Kabuki to the West”), Carol C. Davis (“Decade of Dreams: Democracy and the Birth of Nepal’s Engaged Stage, 1980–1990”), and William Peterson (“The Singapore Arts Festival at Thirty: Going Global, Glocal, Grobal”) show the interplay of politics and performance practice in the twentieth century. Wetmore is yet another scholar who is rethinking what happened to kabuki in the period that followed World War II. Along with James Brandon and Barbara Thornbury, whose works have appeared in the past two years in *ATJ*, Wetmore helps us see how kabuki played to American expatriates in Japan and American viewers in the United States—
showing differences as the art crossed national borders. Wetmore’s article helps us understand American perception and reception, noting that the Cold War impact on the world stage made for a recasting of Japan and her arts by 1954 as capitalistic in the face of communism, nonthreatening in its gender presentation, and an important study of an American friend in an otherwise worrisome Asian political scene.

Carol Davis looks at the theatre that was part of the Nepali people’s movement of the 1980s. Her model is analogous to “people’s theatre” deployed as political activism in many parts of the world since the 1960s. Davis’s work helps us see the genesis of political change via theatre-agitation. As we contemplate the 2008 end of the monarchy and the election of a Marxist president in Nepal, we can understand how this work of the 1980s led toward the situation today. Davis reminds us that theatre is a potent force in Asian prodemocracy movements to the present.

William Peterson discusses the Singapore Arts Festival at present. He shows a different aspect of theatre and political consonance. He argues that the arts have been embraced in Singapore in the name of commerce. The festival programming leads toward a brave new world full of glitz but sans content. Packaging (cool and noncontroversial) is the message. His warnings, while specific to Singapore, arguably apply to a wider sphere of international festivals. We are consumers of these events, which are often the best-funded and house-packing contemporary performances. Peterson invites us to look unblinkingly at the forces of global capitalism that fund and promote them. Peterson asks us to contemplate the future we want, arguing that continued support of such practice eviscerates local arts embedded in particulars of place, time, and history. Do we want to become what we like to buy?

Two papers from the debut panel from the 2008 Association for Asian Performance are also included. They show us that young scholars are also addressing questions of history and politics. Heather Phillips looks at aspects of eco-theatre in contemporary Chinese huaju. Ming-Lun Wu discusses the success of a Taiwan’s Ming Hwa Yuan Company gesai (Taiwanese opera). Performance, book, and media reviews fill out the volume. While the articles cross a hundred years, they invite us to see the Asian stage of the last century as full of sound and fury and signifying very much.

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