■ *Gillian Arrighi*
University of Newcastle
■ *Jonathan Bollen*
University of New South Wales

Editorial

With this edition of *Popular Entertainment Studies,* the editorial and production team are very proud to mark ten years of publication. Our first edition was in 2010, just when academic publishing globally was tentatively moving towards open, online accessibility. Over the past decade the journal has maintained its interdisciplinary and international scope, together with its commitment to open access, and the double-blind peer review process, publishing research by scholars from all career stages that examines a diverse range of historical and contemporary entertainment paradigms across a broad field of artforms.

Preparing this editorial has taken us back to the inaugural edition, titled 'Re-defining Popular Entertainments,' in which the editorial canvassed various attempts by scholars to define the term 'popular entertainments' over the preceding 35 years. Observing that: "From our perspective, these pioneering efforts to reclaim lost theatre forms, to validate and schematise popular entertainments in order to make them academically accessible, may appear agonisingly strained," our editorial discussed the key terms that, as we saw it then, were important to critical consideration of the matter of popular entertainments. At this ten-year marker, it is worth revisiting that discussion.

> "The terms "popular," "popularity" and "entertainment" are central to our discussions. "Entertainment" derives from the Latin "intertenere" and the French "entretenir" – "to hold mutually or between" according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition). Thus in our context the term describes a bond which is established between two parties: performers and spectators, which they "maintain" throughout the event in which they participate. If the two parties "maintain" this bond – an interactive engagement takes place that can be defined as "entertainment." There are no pejorative connotations nor value judgements embedded in these terms, merely the description of two contributing parties to an event in which they are both complicit. Equally, the terms "popular" and "popularity" need some qualification (*pace* Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams). Both derive from the Latin "popularis" and "popularitas" which originally pertain to notions of "fellow citizenship" (so Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 1879).

In other words, the terms originally define a community of people who come from the same city or state and who thereby share common values. In their English translations, this commonality is expanded to mean "the fact of being liked, admired or supported by many people" (the Oxford English Dictionary again). Thus "popular" is defined as "belonging to the people as a whole." To be sure "belonging to or used by ordinary people" emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries when "ordinary" was positioned as the antithesis of the "noble" or the "aristocratic" or the "economically privileged." Nevertheless, it seems that the fundamental meaning of the terms defined something, an artefact or even an experience, that is "available to the whole community regardless of status, political affiliation or taste." It's also true that the term "popular" assumes a meaning of something "intended for or suited to the understanding or taste of ordinary people as opposed to specialists in the field." So we return to a definition of a work of art, a piece of music, or a performance "with general appeal intended primarily to entertain, please or amuse." Perhaps significantly, the definition excludes any reference to the need for instruction. Thus when we come to define popular entertainments we are left with a performative event in which an interactive engagement occurs between performers and spectators (entertainment); the event is intended to appeal to a community, to people "as a whole" (popular). While there exists ongoing debate about the definition of "ordinary people," the terms suggest immediate accessibility through commonalities of understanding. These commonalities, of course, have been profoundly affected by the relentless progress of globalisation, while the internet developments especially in the last 10 years, have redefined and challenged our understanding of "fellow citizenship." Two other terms need to be included among our basic concepts that underpin popular entertainment: "spectacle" and "performance." They have, of course, been extensively investigated, but for our purposes they embody two enduring aspects of all popular entertainments, the interactivity that takes place between those who exhibit themselves and those who wish to view those exhibitions."[1]

In our inaugural call for papers for that first edition, we suggested that "the nature of performance and [live] presence may well have changed" in the preceding 35 years and drew attention to an "ongoing debate and discussion about the nature and scope of popular entertainments." Ten years on, through the prism of the five articles published in this edition, we are able to draw attention to ongoing developments in the field and, as evidenced by the critical analysis brought forward by each of the current five authors, to innovations in the ways that contemporary audiences are interacting with performers.

The experience of liveness in popular entertainments is changing as creative producers incorporate the media technologies integrated by digital networks to engage new audience formations for their work. These are global developments with far-reaching implications for the distribution of productive capability, the accumulation of popular capital, and the capture of audience interest. In particular, articles in this issue reveal how producers are using social

media technologies to intensify the relation between audience and performance. Conceptualised as affording the audience an increased capacity to participate, to feedback into and co-create the experience of performance, and to extend its mediation beyond the time and place of the event, these new intensities of audience interaction and engagement are also profitable forms of capture, harnessed to narratives of economic development, commercial success, and personal growth.

Zihui Lu's article, "Idolized Popular Performance: Musical The Prince of Tennis and Japanese 2.5-Dimensional Theatre," introduces the genre of 2.5D theatre. Commercially developed in Japan over the last two decades as a theatre of adaptation, 2.5D theatre draws on the serialised media of manga, anime and video-games to produce theatrical spectacle for live audiences. The scale of production is striking: over a thousand plays produced in the genre since 2003, led by the Tenimyu (*Musical The Prince of Tennis*) series, which has been in continuous production for 16 years. These are theatre productions that incorporate live action and projected animations, harnessing the emerging talents of young performers and their fans into the serial co-production of hybridised entertainment. Lu demonstrates how the success of 2.5D theatre, in securing the interests of fans to serialised productions, adopts the idol culture of Japan's music industry. With the interactive "pseudo-intimacy" of the new social media, young desires for success, fame, and fandom are translated across actor, character and audience in developmental narratives of growth towards "graduation."

Likewise, Hyunshik Ju frames the extraordinary recent success of BTS, the Korean boy band, within a "narrative of growth." In the Korean entertainment industry's production of K-pop, the emergence of BTS is historically framed by a national narrative of economic growth. Ju recounts how, after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the South Korean government reconfigured the "Korean culture industry as a national project aimed at gaining competitive advantage in the global market." What distinguishes BTS, however, is not only the group's success at the pinnacle of the 'Korean wave' of pop-culture exports. Ju finds in the idea of 'premediation,' drawn from Richard Grusin's new media scholarship, a way to articulate how the creative productions of BTS are shaped in advance by their ARMY of fans who are integrated worldwide by hashtags on social media. Ju describes how fans project the "online premediation" of their "future with BTS" as an "emancipatory endeavour" in which "a narrative of their communal growth" together with BTS realises the "neoliberal capitalism" of K-pop cosmopolitanism.

WoongJo Chang and Hyung-Deok Shin study the development of K-Live Hologram Music Concerts, in which the creative talents of K-pop artists are combined with the digital technologies of virtual reality to create a "virtual experience" of the pop music concert, scaled for profitable delivery in entertainment precincts and shopping malls. Chang and Shin's research provides a model for investigating how innovations with digital technologies are transforming the experience of liveness in the production of popular entertainment. They foreground an economic perspective on experience, conceptualised as a product, co-constructed with audiences by creative producers. The K-Live concerts are developing a new "content category" through the

interaction of telecommunications companies, artists, technicians and entertainment producers, supported by government investment. This research focuses, in particular, on the audience experience. The "realness of the performances seemed to matter less with audience members than [the researchers] expected." Rather, what the audience find compelling at K-Live concerts is the creative integration of "real-life" participation within the virtual experience – taking a selfie that becomes part of the spectacle, interacting with an actual performer in costume, joining the virtual performers on stage, sharing photographs of the experience with friends.

While the first three articles in this edition investigate relatively recent modes of production and spectating in both Korea and Japan, the fourth article, "Laughter from Hades: Aristophanic Voice Today," by Ifigenija Radulović and Ismene Petkovits, shifts our attention to popular theatre production in contemporary Greece through a close examination of an original play with subversive content spanning both the ancient and modern worlds. *Aristophaniad*, written and produced by the *Idea* Theatre Company in Athens in 2016, harnessed narrative themes and politically satirical intent from Aristophanes' Old Attic Comedies (425 BC – 328 BC), and reconstituted them in ways that challenged and critiqued social and political challenges faced by Greece's population in recent years. Through commentary that elucidates the original sources for Aristophanes' satire and illuminates corresponding topical events in contemporary Greece, the authors argue that "*Aristophaniad* demonstrates that Aristophanes' play texts are always fresh, always relevant, representing an everlasting wisdom, like an ancient prophecy." *Aristophaniad*'s mixture of various genres and dramaturgical modes, which include grotesque, pantomime, musical, ballet, opera, stand up, and circus, leads the authors to acknowledge that for all those acquainted with Aristophanes' comedies, "this is an unusual and bold attempt to interpret his work." Their engagingly written article makes a contribution to the under-documented and under-researched field of Aristophanic comedy reception.

Just as Radulović and Petkovits' study links socio-political anxieties experienced in both ancient and modern Greece, the fifth article in this edition also links two different epochs, that of Shakespeare and colonial Taiwan at the turn of the 20th century. Yi-Hsin Hsu's article, "Performing Shakespeare in Colonial Taiwan: early Japanese settlers and the bounds of theatrical imperialism, 1895-1916," examines how Japanese transadaptations and translations of plays by Shakespeare were used to instruct and assimilate colonised subjects in Taiwan and thus serve imperial Japanese interests. Mobilising archival records concerning production and reception, Hsu extends current understanding about the scope and quantity of Shakespeare plays presented in Taiwan during this period and argues that Shakespeare performances functioned as sites of cultural interaction between Taiwanese and Japanese in the colonised territory. Hsu's examination of the reception of these productions supports her argument that they were viewed as popular entertainments that entertained and delighted, and that discerning audiences were capable of endorsing excellent productions and rejecting poorer endeavours. She argues that Taiwanese theatre-goers' long-cultivated theatrical flair "was capable of subverting the power structure of the colonisers and the colonised in playhouses."

With this edition marking ten years of *Popular Entertainment Studies*, we also want to acknowledge and thank the many authors, peer reviewers, and readers, as well as the Library staff at the University of Newcastle, who have all supported, in various ways, the development and production of the journal since 2010.

---

[1] Victor Emeljanow, "Editorial," *Popular Entertainment Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 1-5.