

***Theatre Topics* Call for Papers: Special Issue on “Theatre in Extremis”**

The Latin phrase *in extremis* signals calamitous circumstances, specifically the point at which death is probable if not imminent. While the term appears often in legal and medical discourse, Baz Kershaw applies it to theatre and performance in *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events*. By his charge, “theatre in extremis” describes a text or performance tradition that has reached the “end of its tether” and, therefore, requires extraordinary measures to “preserve it, restore it, or connect it to some other more urgently meaningful domain” (58). Though Kershaw is most interested in external ecological threats to theatre’s health and survival, such threats may take many forms—and may very well arise from within the theatre itself.

Because dramatic texts regularly reflect the cultural moment of their creation, their relevance and legibility can progressively erode as cultural values, tastes, mores, and politics shift over time. Furthermore, new ideologies, methodologies, and technologies developed, practiced, and perpetuated by both theatre scholars and artists can *also* render plays and performance traditions obsolete. It should seem a natural consequence of time, then, that play, musical, and opera texts all will eventually cease to find audiences, and disappear from the collective cultural memory: that they will die.

However, multiple stakeholders regularly undertake calculated extraordinary measures to circumvent such certain death for theatre in extremis. Such measures include, but are not limited to:

- archival extractions (such as Alice Childress’s *Trouble in Mind*)
- textual reconstructions (such as Stephen Greenblatt and Charles L. Mee’s *Cardenio*),
- directorial interventions (such as Target Margin Theater’s *Show/Boat: A River*),
- dramaturgical rehabilitations (such as George C. Wolfe’s *Shuffle Along, or, the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All that Followed*),
- contemporary adaptations (such as Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik’s *Spring Awakening* and Branden Jacobs-Jenkins’s *Everybody*), and
- critical reconceptualizations (such as Paula Vogel’s *Indecent*).

This special issue of *Theatre Topics* invites submissions—especially those centering marginalized identities and non-anglophone topics—that explicate, assess, critique, or complicate the ways in which such stakeholders rescue and, necessarily, revive theatre in extremis vis-à-vis scholarship, pedagogy, and/or production. Contributors might offer:

- a defense or rejection of a particular dramatic text’s (or performance tradition’s) continued presence in course curricula, scholarship, or the production repertoire,
- a directorial, dramaturgical, pedagogical, or historiographic intervention for a particular play or performance tradition “in extremis” presented as a case study,
- a proposed method for adapting plays or performance traditions in extremis undertaken with the deliberate intent to extend their stage lives, or

- an approach to directing or restoring otherwise moribund works.

We invite submissions taking these or other novel forms for the July 2026 print and online issues of *Theatre Topics*. The deadline for submissions is Wednesday, October 1, 2025. Early submissions are encouraged. This issue will be edited by Sukanya Chakrabarti (San Jose State University) and guest editors Bryan M. Vandevender (Bucknell University) and Brian D. Valencia (Wright State University/Florida International University).

These submissions may take any of three formats: (1) Original Articles, limit 6,000 words, are formal pieces of scholarship that undergo peer review; (2) Online Submissions, limit 4,000 words, are multimedia-enabled, peer-reviewed pieces that share and reflect on production, pedagogy, and/or research; and (3) Notes from the Field, limit 4,000 words, are carefully considered and critically informed personal reflections, interviews, or from-the-trenches accounts. For submission instructions, visit our website: <https://www.jhuptheatre.org/theatre-topics/author-guidelines>. Additionally, feel free to contact the editors with any questions or inquiries:

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