

# Editorial

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*Early Theatre*'s readers, contributors, and editors have much to celebrate. Readers of the December 2019 issue will be happy to encounter five original, full-length articles ranging chronologically from the York pageant cycle (the topic of Arlynda Boyer's essay) through to performances in Kent, 1277–1641 (discussed in James Forse's article). Additionally, we direct readers to the eagerly awaited Issues in Review section on disability in early modern drama and theatre, organized by contributing editor Susan L. Anderson. Succinctly mapping the current state of the field with respect to the study of disability in early modern English literature, Anderson's introduction to the section suggests possible approaches for future research, some of which are modelled in contributions by Lindsey Row-Heyveld, Justin Shaw, and Katherine Williams.

In recognition of contributors to the journal, every two years *Early Theatre* offers prizes in three categories. Please join us in congratulating the prize winners from our 2017 and 2018 volumes. (For full details, see our Essay Prize announcements <https://earlytheatre.org/earlytheatre/prizes#winner-2019>.)

In the category of Best Note or Short Essay, both the winner Tracey Hill and runner up Simon Smith published their pieces in the 20.2 (December 2017) Issues in Review section on 'Beaumont400' organized by contributing editor Lucy Munro. While Hill's essay, in the words of our judges, convincingly 'assails an unassailable given about *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, namely that it mocks citizens and their theatrical tastes as naive, stupid, and hopelessly unfashionable', Smith's analysis of *The Scornful Lady* 'contributes to debates about the textuality of performance by looking at the printed text in both social and imaginative dimensions'.

For Best Article on the Interpretation of a Topic in Early Drama, our judges selected in first place Matt Carter's work on interiority, sword combat, and gender in *The Roaring Girl*. In this 'highly original essay', which 'examines under-used historical texts', a 'close analysis of the subtleties of swordplay, read through a gendered lens ... introduces us to a new semiotic language of the stage in the subtleties of individual techniques, understandable, no doubt, to the knowledgeable audiences of the Renaissance "fight club"'. Honourable mention in this category goes to Erika Boeckeler, whose 'playful' essay on 'The *Hamlet* First Quarto (1603) &

the Play of Typography’, in the words of our adjudicators, presents a ‘sophisticated argument about the impact of visual language in early modern England’.

In the category of Best Article in Theatre History, the prize goes to the late Stephen K. Wright’s ‘The Salting Down of Gertrude: Transgression and Preservation in Three Early German Carnival Plays’. This article not only offers ‘new editions and translations of three fifteenth-century Bavarian texts’ but also ‘situates these works in important contexts familiar to the broader community of early theatre scholars’: namely, critical and theoretical conversations on medieval and early modern carnival; the manuscript matrix of late medieval performance texts; and the vexed social and cultural work of early theatre. Stephen passed away on 28 June 2019. We are grateful to be able to share the committee’s commendation for his work with Steve’s colleagues at the Catholic University of America and at the Medieval and Renaissance Drama Society (MRDS), as well as with his wife Sue, who is honoured to acknowledge this award on his behalf. Over the past two decades, Steve frequently submitted exceptional work to this journal, and he is the winner of not only the 2019 but also the 2014 *Early Theatre* prize for theatre history. In his work with the journal’s editors, Steve was consistently responsive, polite, thoughtful, and unassuming. A generous, well-published scholar and teacher, he was eager to mentor and to share what he discovered during his researches.

Similar qualities mark another significant contributor to the journal who has recently left us: David Bevington. In the context of David’s August 2019 loss for Revels Plays editors, now faced with the question of how to replace such a keen-eyed, watchful, and enthusiastic reader of texts, Richard Dutton has noted that David’s death marks ‘The end of an era, the passing of a great soul’. Many members of the *Early Theatre* board would say likewise, especially of David’s intuitive grasp of ideas that he recognized as bound to flourish. Numerous younger scholars owe him a debt of gratitude for furthering their careers (on our journal alone, Alexandra Johnston, Gloria Betcher, Garrett Epp, and Helen Ostovich). David was a remarkable editor and peer reviewer as well as a good friend, always ready with an opinion that pinpointed the error whose correction might make all the difference between a mediocre article and an excellent one. Despite his brilliance, he was a humble and kind man, generous and thorough in all his endeavours. The editors dedicate this issue of the journal to David and to Steve, in celebration of their lives and in anticipation of a future significantly influenced by these two extraordinary shapers of attitudes towards medieval and early modern drama in performance.

Finally, we invite readers to celebrate with us the tireless work of Helen Ostovich, who, after twenty-six years with the *REED Newsletter* (1994–7) and with

*Early Theatre* (founded by Helen in 1998), will be retiring as of this issue's publication. Under Helen's editorship, the *REED Newsletter* published documentary evidence of early drama, items on records research, and requests by scholars for information; it also listed calls for papers, conferences, and notices of recent publications. The change to *Early Theatre* in 1998 reflected the growing stature of the earlier publication and the need for a scholarly journal, combining theatre history, criticism, and performance, which would have a longer and more independent life than a newsletter attached to *REED*. *Early Theatre* began as an annual, with six to eight peer-reviewed articles per year, and soon thereafter moved to bi-annual publication, with one issue in June and one in December (now averaging seventeen peer-reviewed articles and notes each year). Together with Karen Bamford, whom she credits for the idea, Helen initiated *Early Theatre's* book reviews, a very successful section of the journal that each subsequent review editor has further developed. She also devised the Issues in Review section, a unique feature of our journal actively promoting collaboration in the discussion of theatre, itself a collaborative art. The supportive nature of the journal's editorial team is also a testament to Helen's leadership: overseeing our shared commitment to and execution of exacting standards with respect to rigorous peer review but also in relation to copyediting and house style, Helen has also encouraged our individual and collective work toward shaping new journal policies and initiatives.

As of January 2020, Helen will support the journal in her new role as a member of the advisory board. Melinda Gough, who has served as co-editor with Helen since 2013, will stay on as editor, supported by associate editors Erin E. Kelly (University of Victoria) and Sarah Johnson (Royal Military College of Canada) as well as book reviews editor Georgina Lucas (Queen's University Belfast). Together, the four of us invite *Early Theatre's* board members, contributors, peer reviewers, and readers to join us in thanking Helen for her past contributions, and wishing her much success in her future adventures.

THE EDITORS

