‘Global Clicks through Theatrescapes’
Digital Humanities meet Theatrical Pasts

Public Talk @ CREATE Salon, Amsterdam, 14 March, 2017

Nic Leonhardt, ERC Project Developing Theatre, LMU Munich
Centre of Global Theatre Histories
LMUexcellent-Project Theatrescapes. Digital Theatre History

@nicleonhardt
n.leonhardt@lmu.de
The next 37 minutes...

✧ DH in Theatre History: a status quo
✧ Spot on 2 Case Studies:
  Theatrescapes Research Tool
  MOOC “Theatre & Globalization”
✧ Looking Ahead: Future Tasks of DH in Theatre Studies
DH in Theatre Research: Status Quo

Digital Humanities!
DH in Theatre Research: Status Quo

Digitization projects in libraries and theatre collections (heterogeneous source material; playbills/ Theaterzettel; for preservation reasons, often NOT in conjunction with scholarly work)

Digital resources/ coordination of collections (FID, Portal for resources related to theatre, ECLAP)

Text editions (mostly single, famous playwrights)

Networks of individual playwrights and the mobility of their work (e.g. Shakespeare, Ibsen (ibsenstage))

Networks of theatrical landscapes of a region (cities (topography)/ countries)

Theatre Architecture: registration and cartographic mapping (e.g. Theatrescapes, Theatrefinder) virtual reconstructions of theatrical venues

Acting: re-animation, motion capture &

Dance: reconstruction, data collections, new experiments in “volumetrics”
DH in Theatre Research: Status Quo

(roughly) 3 (interconnected) **phases** of Digital Humanities (in Theatre Research)

1) Applying digital technology to the **recording and archiving** of theatrical goods, sources and artifacts: **operational – Digitization**
(roughly) 3 (interconnected) phases of Digital Humanities (in Theatre Research)

1) Applying digital technology to the recording and archiving of theatrical goods, sources and artifacts: operational – Digitization

1) Developing Databases, Collections and Infrastructures for systematizing and displaying digitized material: quantitative – scientific approach
(roughly) 3 (interconnected) phases of Digital Humanities (in Theatre Research)

1) Applying digital technology to the recording and archiving of theatrical goods, sources and artifacts: operational – Digitization

1) Developing Databases, Collections and Infrastructures for systematizing and displaying digitized material: quantitative – scientific approach

2) Connecting and expanding phase 1 & 2; focus on finding ways of mediating DH projects and digital collections: public access, citizen scholarship, co-creation experiences, annotations, playful interaction, education, public outreach: communicative, qualitative – Humanities approach
“One of the things digital humanities shares with the sciences, is a heavy reliance on instruments, on tools. Sometimes new tools are built to answer preexisting questions. Sometimes, […] new questions and answers are the byproduct of the creation of new tools. Sometimes it takes a while; in which meantime tools themselves and the whiz-bang effects they produce must be the focus of scholarly attention.”

(T. Scheinfeldt in *Hacking the Academy*, 2013: 56f.)
Case Study 1: Theatrescapes Research Tool
- research & outreach
Research Project

*Global Theatre Histories* (2010-2016)

- LMU Munich
- financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG)
- now Centre of Global Theatre Histories (since fall 2016)

[Website](http://www.gth.theaterwissenschaft.unimuenchen.de/index.html)
GTH: Underlying Ideas:

- As one of the leading media and cultural institutions of the 19th and early 20th century, theatre of all genres acted as a global currency or good of cultural exchange, mobility, and trade.

- Accordingly, Global Theatre Histories deals with transnational entanglements of theatrical goods, artists, artistic ideas, formats, Cultural mobility
  Theatrical Trade routes, Dissemination of Theatre as a means of modernization

- Underlying Concepts are
  1) Deterritorialization
  2) Modernization
  3) Connectivity

- Digital resources and collaborative working modes essential
“The idea of ‘global theatre histories’ revolves around a central assumption or hypothesis: that during the second half of the nineteenth century a seismic shift took place in the way nations and cultures began to deal with one another and that this shift is reflected in the way theatre was organized, disseminated and how it functioned as a cultural force.”

GTH booklet, p. 6
Pillars of GTH

- Research (individual & collaborative)
- Teaching
- Theatrescapes Tool (DH sister project)
- MOOC
- Journal
- The ‘Transnational Theatre History’ series
- GTH Center since fall 2016
GTH: individual research projects of core team members

- *Theatrical Networks in the Age of Empire: Maurice E. Bandmann and the Globalization of Theatre* (Christopher Balme, New Zealand / Germany)

- *Transatlantic Theatrical Mediators: Circuits, Agencies and Brokers at the Turn of the 20th Century* (Nic Leonhardt (Germany))

- *Theatre Houses & Theatre Training in the Middle East* (Ziad Adwan (Syria))

- *A New Theatre Landscapes for Belgrade (1841-1914)* (Marija Djokic (Serbia))

- *The Tropic Trapeze: Circus in Colonial India* (Anirban Ghosh (India))

- *The Parsi Community and its Theatre* (Rashna Nicholson (India/ Italy))

- *The Bayreuth Enterprise (1848-1914)* (Gero Toegl (Austria))

- *Sounding Modernities: Music and Theatre in Manila and the Asia-Pacific, 1869-1946* (meLê yamomo (Philippines/ Netherlands))
Theatrescapes Research Tool

- [http://theatrescapes.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/](http://theatrescapes.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/)
- sister project to GTH
- since 2014
- Financed by LMU excellent Start–Up Grant
Theatrescapes Research Tool

- the historiography of theatre and media history dedicated to analyzing its objects as phenomena of global circulation and exchange, relies on a relational and multi-dimensional perspective

From that follows that the Theatrescapes Tool

- combines questions of global history and transnational theory with the paradigm of Digital Humanities (DH) from an interdisciplinary and collaborative perspective
Theatrescapes Tool: Aims

**Localizing and profiling**
- purpose-built theatres
- theatrical venues hosting international troupes

**Tracking and Revealing**
- theatrical trade routes
- routes & networks of performers/agents/impresarios

**Developing and making accessible**
- a relational database on the basis of geo- und chronoreferencing
Case Study 2
MOOC on Theatre & Globalization
  ▪ pedagogy & research
Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Theatre & Globalization

- First launched in spring 2015
- 7000 students from all over the world enrolled
- Relaunch in August 2016
MOOC Theatre & Globalization, Syllabus
MOOC Theatre & Globalization

Focus: Global Hubs and Local Theatres
Hubs and Contact Zones

Assignment: „Localizing Theatres in your hometown“

- Do you have a theatre building in your hometown dating back 50,100 years or even further?
- When was it built?
- How did it look back then?
- How does it look today?
- Is it still in use as a theatre? Or has it become a cinema or something else, perhaps a shopping mall?

Students were provided with references to newspaper archives and were allowed to use wikipedia or other freely available online resources
MOOC Theatre & Globalization

>> assignment cont.
Information requested:
When was it built?
When did major changes occur such as relocation, fire, etc. who owned or built it?
Did a major star actors or troupes perform there?
You can also go to the place and take a picture of the theater as it looks today

>> students were provided with a mask to enter their data

>> We then would plot the data on a digital map

http://www.theatrescapes.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/#home
Looking Ahead:
Future Tasks of DH in Theatre Studies

[Image of a child standing in a field with compass points]
Creating, enlarging, questioning, rewriting knowledge
“[...] the most significant characteristic of the ‘digital revolution’ is an explosive new amount of interaction and participation that is profoundly different in volume and character from what has gone before. It poses new challenges for theatre [and theatre research, NL] that are only beginning to be understood. It offers new audiences and new communities. And it demands new forms of performance and new spaces to show it in.”

**Theatre in a Digital Age**

**productive whirl & constructive connectedness of centrifugal $\Rightarrow$ centripetal forces**

**Centrifugal:** strong orientation towards new media and the digital by theatre practitioners and theatre scholarship

**Centripetal:** recalling and reconsidering of conventions, media specificity, methodology - performing the archives of theatre and theatre research
Education & Publication enhanced by digital means

• E-learning
• Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) (e.g. Theatre & Globalization, C. Balme: https://www.coursera.org/course/globaltheatre
• Social media
• Open access

• Wanted: Curriculum for DH in Theatre and Performances Studies!!
Building new communities and/or strengthening existing ones

Theatrescapes & Global Theatre Histories Hackathon, January, 2015
Building new communities and/or strengthening existing ones

- Increasing accessibility of resources and knowledge
- Transparence/“Monitoring“: who is doing what? At what points can we joint forces?
- Shifting working mode of scholars and curators: sharing and exchange instead of solipstic mode of work >> (digital) Salon!
- Open scholarship in open formats
- Encouraging the community outside academia to contribute
- Kindle interest in scholarly work by making it accessible to non-scholars
- Local and translocal lobby of Theatre Studies: collaboration and exchange
- Alliances!
- Representing DH in Theatre Research at DH conferences
Thank you for your kind attention!

Nic Leonhardt, LMU Munich
n. leonhardt@lmu.de
nicleonhardt.wordpress.com
@nicleonhardt