

Ulla Kallenbach

University of Bergen

TRANSGRESSING BORDERS: PRACTICES OF MOBILITY AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE AT THE ROYAL DANISH THEATRE

In this paper, I will discuss the Royal Danish Theatre's practices of international travelling and its impact on the national repertoire and aesthetics in the long nineteenth century. The paper will present work in progress from the research project *Artistic Exchanges: The Royal Danish Theatre and Europe* (Aarhus University/University of Bergen, 2021-2024).

The Royal Danish Theatre, founded in 1748, was a key site for cultivating and examining Danish national identity, but the significance of the theatre owed to a marked international outlook and artistic exchange. The transgression of borders was from the onset, integral to the theatre's institutional identity, since the multilingual kingdom of Denmark in varying constellations also has included Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Schleswig-Holstein and overseas colonies. Furthermore, the theatre was both founded by, and relied on inviting artists from, abroad. Several of the first ballet masters, dancers, theatre painters, musicians, technicians and even directors came from France, Germany and Italy, including Vincenzo Galeotti, who created the first Nordic-themed ballet, *Lagherta* (1801). Likewise, the Danish performing artists travelled Europe extensively – often encouraged and funded by the theatre – drawing inspiration from leading European artists and aesthetic currents. Dramatist and theatre director Johan Ludvig Heiberg's (1791-1860) stays in Paris and Kiel, for example, inspired his development of the Danish vaudeville, and ballet master August Bournonville's (1805-79) studies of European folkloric dances were highpoints in his ballets, even becoming (and still being perceived as) quintessentially "Danish", such as the ballet *Napoli* (1842). The artists practices of transgressing national borders, thus also became aesthetic practices of transgression, transferring cultures from one domain to another, which in turn would transgress (ideas of) nationalities.

Biography

Ulla Kallenbach, PhD, is Associate Professor in Theatre Studies, University of Bergen, Norway. Her principal field of research is the cultural history of imagination and dramaturgy, particularly the performativity of drama and the point of view of the spectator. Her monograph, *The Theatre of Imagining – A Cultural History of Imagination in the Mind and on the Stage*, (Palgrave 2018) was the first comprehensive study of the cultural history of imagination in the context of theatre and drama. Kallenbach is President of the Association for Nordic Theatre Scholars, Head of the Norwegian research group for theatre history and dramaturgy, and steering committee member of the Centre for Historical Performance Practice, Aarhus University, Denmark. She currently heads the research project *Artistic Exchanges: The Royal Danish Theatre and Europe*, which develops digital methods for investigating artistic exchange and performative representations of Europe through the the unique archive of the Royal Danish Theatre.

ullakallenbach.net