

# Archivists, Librarians, and Theatre Research



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**RÉSUMÉ** Cet article est un rapport partiel d'une étude menée par l'auteure pendant trois ans (2002-2005), intitulée *Sources and Methodology of Theatre Research in the View of Scholars and Information Professionals*, qui a permis de dresser un tableau de la recherche dans le domaine du théâtre, du point de vue des chercheurs, des archivistes et des bibliothécaires des arts de la scène. Cette étude abordait, autant que le permettait l'échantillonnage établi, la diversité des intérêts, des approches et des sources utilisés pour la recherche dans le domaine du théâtre, le rôle et les caractéristiques du travail des archivistes et des bibliothécaires dans ce contexte, et l'interaction entre ces deux groupes. Elle concluait que les chercheurs, les archivistes et les bibliothécaires des arts de la scène ont plusieurs points en commun, et que le travail qu'ils font fournit des outils importants pour aborder plusieurs points essentiels qui relèvent des sciences de l'archivistique, telle que la prolifération des médias et des sources dynamiques et interactives.

**ABSTRACT** This article is a partial report on the author's three-year (2002–2005) study entitled *Sources and Methodology of Theater Research in the View of Scholars and Information Professionals*, which provided a picture of theatre research from the points of view of theatre scholars and of performing arts archivists and librarians. The study addressed, within the limits of the sample analyzed, the diversity of interests, approaches, and sources used in theatre research, the role and characteristics of the work of archivists and librarians in this context, and the interaction between these groups. From the study, it emerged that theatre scholars, performing arts archivists and librarians share many similarities, and that what they do may provide powerful tools for addressing many issues that are at the forefront of archival science, such as the proliferation of dynamic and interactive media and sources.

I had always been aware of the importance of archives and libraries, but it was not until I started to work on a study of the plays of twentieth-century Italian theatre critic and playwright Renato Simoni<sup>1</sup> that I fully comprehended what these institutions meant to scholarship. Simoni was the most important

1 Francesca Marini, "Renato Simoni drammaturgo" ["Renato Simoni Playwright"] (undergraduate thesis, University of Bologna, Italy, 1997).

theatre critic in Italy until his death in 1952; when he was young he had also written plays, some in Italian and some in one of Veneto's regional dialects.<sup>2</sup> The texts of the plays had been published, but at the time of my study they were no longer commercially available, and there were very few scholarly works on the plays or Simoni in general. I thus toured Italy's archives and libraries to work almost entirely on primary sources and out-of-print publications. I examined the plays' promptbooks, housed in the Biblioteca di Studi Teatrali of the "Casa Goldoni" in Venice, as well as stage photographs and correspondence that were in large part present in Simoni's own library, which is the core of the Biblioteca Teatrale Livia Simoni at the Museo Teatrale alla Scala di Milano. I also looked at newspapers and newspaper clippings. Among the many other sources used, I spoke with many people, and in particular would like to remember the Italian scholar and journalist Luigi Maria Personè, who lived more than a century and had met extraordinary theatre personalities, including the great actress Eleonora Duse.

While investigating Simoni's life and work, analyzing his plays and their first stagings, I came to a clear understanding of the key role of the archivists and librarians who over time had acquired, preserved, and made available the sources I was using. Without their efforts my research would have been much more difficult, and at times simply impossible to carry out. My interest in archival work started then, in the mid-nineties, and has since co-existed with my interest in theatre and theatre research, leading me through formal archival education in Italy and a doctorate in information studies in the United States, to a position as an assistant professor of archival studies in Canada. There are many scholars and practitioners who feel at ease in more than one profession and, notwithstanding the challenges and frustrations, like to promote reciprocal understanding among communities. When you are in two camps, it is easier to see what can be built through true collaboration, and also, unfortunately, what is being misunderstood, ignored, or downplayed.

Because of the nature of my work, I became interested in the dynamics of the relationship between theatre scholars and the archivists and librarians who manage performing arts materials. I wanted to better understand what they do, what they need, and how they relate to each other. By examining the methodology of theatre scholarly research and highlighting the network of sources on which it is based, I wanted "to make protagonists those things that usually end up in the notes"<sup>3</sup> of scholarly writings. I therefore designed and carried out a three-year (2002–2005) study on *Sources and Methodology of Theater*

2 The five plays are: *La vedova* (1902) [*The Widow*]; *Carlo Gozzi* (1903); *Tramonto* (1906) [*Sunset*]; *Il matrimonio di Casanova*, written in collaboration with Ugo Ojetti (1910) [*Casanova's Wedding*]; and *Congedo* (1910) [*Farewell*].

3 Eugenia Baroncelli, telephone conversation with author, 23 June 2002.

*Research in the View of Scholars and Information Professionals*,<sup>4</sup> gathering data through forty-one in-person interviews in Europe and in the United States. In this article I will present some of the study's findings that relate to theatre scholars and to performing arts archivists and librarians.<sup>5</sup> I will give an overview of my findings, providing the readers with a first look at communities that have so far been underrepresented in archival journals. I would like this article to serve as an easy-to-read introduction to issues of theatre research and performing arts archives and libraries as well as a tool that practitioners can use to raise awareness and visibility about what they do.<sup>6</sup>

The structure of this article is as follows: the study, with its motivations and context, is introduced in this opening section and in the second section, which offers a brief description of the study participants, of the interview procedures, and of the archives and libraries analyzed. In the third section, I introduce concepts related to performance. The subsequent sections contain highlights of the findings about scholars, archivists, and librarians. The last section offers a brief concluding comparison and discussion.

### **The Study and its Participants**

The study provided a picture of theatre research from the points of view of theatre scholars and of performing arts archivists and librarians. It addressed, within the limits of the sample analyzed, the diversity of interests, approaches, and sources used in theatre research, the role and characteristics of the work of archivists and librarians in this context, and the interaction among these groups. Since performing arts materials contain information that is dynamic, complex, and presents temporal characteristics, the study also aimed to contribute new information to the field of information studies.

The disciplinary perspectives that guided me in my investigation were

4 See Francesca Marini, "Sources and Methodology of Theater Research in the View of Scholars and Information Professionals" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2005). My heartfelt thanks to my dissertation committee at UCLA: my adviser Marcia Bates, Clara Chu, Carl Mueller, and Virginia Walter.

5 This article is the first that I have written based on the study, although I have spoken on the topic at several scholarly and professional theatre, archival, and library conferences, including the June 2006 Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) Annual Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

6 I am not going into a deep analysis of the findings here, but in future writings I hope to cover more of the study's complex outcomes, further developing them and integrating them with my current research. My current research projects focus on *The Performing Arts Artistic and Cultural Heritage: Issues of Arrangement and Description in Repositories* (funded by SSHRC), and on *Future Memory and the Performing Arts: Ethical and Artistic Considerations in Documenting and Preserving Performances*. Funding has also been received from the University of British Columbia Hampton Research Fund for a project titled *Present Memory: Knowledge Requirements for Archivists Preserving Live Theatre*.

those of theatre studies and of archival, library, and information studies, with an emphasis on information seeking behaviour and use. There exists scholarly and professional literature in these disciplines that addresses issues of theatre research methodology and sources.<sup>7</sup> When I started my study there was no other research project presenting and integrating the point of view of scholars, archivists, and librarians, which addressed theatre scholars as a specific group of users. In the area of information seeking, only a few studies addressed research in the performing arts, and none deliberately focused on theatre research in particular.<sup>8</sup> The debate on performance documentation, carried on among archivists and librarians, and among theatre scholars and performance studies scholars, is of course very relevant to my study, but focuses on only one aspect of my investigation.<sup>9</sup> An extended discussion of literature and issues relevant to the topic is not possible in the space of this article, although I will try and briefly introduce the readers to some concepts about performance in the next section.

In Italy, the United States, France, and Belgium, I conducted twenty-two interviews with scholars and nineteen with archivists and librarians, touring their institutions whenever possible.<sup>10</sup> Except for two independent scholars, the scholars interviewed were professors teaching in leading performing arts programs, in both public and private universities. As practical examples of their ways of conducting research, I asked the scholars to discuss some of their projects. These projects showed a variety of interests, approaches, and topics. Figure 1, *Interviews with Scholars*, and Figure 2, *Main Projects*

7 Because of space limitations, I cannot discuss here the vast amount of existing literature on the subject. I therefore refer the readers to the text of Marini, "Sources and Methodology of Theater Research."

8 Two examples of research related to information seeking and use, and partially addressing theatre, although not theatre scholars, are: Laurel Littrell, "Artists: The Neglected Patrons?" paper presented at the Tenth Annual Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries, Denver, Colorado, March 2001, <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlvents/littrell.pdf> (accessed on 2 January 2007); Elisabeth Davies and Pamela J. McKenzie, "Preparing for Opening Night: Temporal Boundary Objects in Textually-mediated Professional Practice," *Information Research*, vol. 10, no. 1 (October 2004), <http://informationr.net/ir/10-1/paper211.html> (accessed on 2 January 2007).

9 See, for example, Kenneth Schlesinger, Pamela Bloom, and Ann Ferguson, eds., *Performance Documentation and Preservation in an Online Environment* (New York, 2004); Denise Varney and Rachel Fensham, "More-And-Less-Than: Liveness, Video Recording, and the Future of Performance," *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. XVI, no. 1 (February 2000), pp. 88–96; Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London and New York, 1993); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC, and London, 2005 [2003]); Matthew Reason, *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (New York, 2006).

10 In the following discussion, I am withholding the names of the interviewees and of their institutions. This is an established practice in qualitative research, and is required by the regulations enforced by the Office for Protection of Research Subjects of the University of California, Los Angeles, with which I was affiliated at the time of the study.

*Discussed by the Scholars Interviewed*, provide a summary of information about the scholars interviewed and about the projects they discussed, listed in the order in which the interviews were conducted.

<b>Interview Number</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Position and Broad Area of Interest</b>	<b>Past or Current Experience as a Theatre Practitioner (when applicable)</b>
1	United States	University Professor, Theatre	Director
2	United States, but living in the United Kingdom	Independent Scholar, Theatrical Costume Design	Costume Designer
4	United States, but living in the United Kingdom	University Professor, Theatre	
5	United States	University Professor, Film	Director
9	Belgium	Ph.D. Candidate, Sociology	
11	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	Actor
14	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	Actor, Director
15	Italy	Independent Scholar, Dance	
16	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	Director, Dramaturg <sup>11</sup>
18	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	Director, Playwright
19	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	
21 (joint interview)	Italy	University Professors, Theatre	
22	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	
23	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	
25	Italy	University Professor, Theatre	

11 See note 12.

28	United States	University Professor, Theatre, Women's Studies	Director, Dancer
31	United States	University Professor, Theatre	Costume Designer
32	United States	University Professor, Theatre	Director, Music Composer
33	United States	University Professor, Theatre	Director
34	United States	University Professor, Theatre	Director
39	United States	University Professor, Theatre	Actor
40	United States	University Professor, Theatre	Playwright

**Figure 1: Interviews with Scholars.** Summary of information about the scholars interviewed, listed in the order in which the interviews were conducted.

Interview Number	Main Projects Discussed in Interviews
1	Introduction to and translation of a Classical Greek author's plays
2	Bibliography and iconography of theatrical costumes, masks, make-up, and wigs
4	Essay on Civil War melodrama and D.W. Griffith
5	Re-creation and staging of a form of vaudeville from the early motion picture era in the United States
9	Research on the politics of government funding for contemporary dance and the arts, from a sociological point of view
11	Research for a book on dramaturgy <sup>12</sup>
14	Research on <i>commedia dell'arte</i> , on French theatre authors, on Gordon Craig, and more
15	Book on women dancers in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century
16	Edition and dramaturgical analysis of a play

12 Dramaturgy is here intended not as the writing of plays, but as the activity of analyzing and explaining a play in view of its staging. This implies interpreting a play in the context of its time and of its author's intentions. Dramaturgy was born in Germany and then spread, taking on slightly different connotations, to other countries, including the United States. On dramaturgy and the role of the dramaturg, see, for example, Susan Jonas, Geof Proehl, and Michael Lupu, eds., *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book* (Fort Worth, Texas, 1997). See also David Kahn, "Performing by the Book: Library Resources for Theatre Artists," *The Reference Librarian*, vol. 22, no. 47 (1994), pp. 167–80.

18	A directorial staging and its documentation on CD-ROM
19	Research on dance and agitprop theatre in Germany
21 (joint interview)	Project on theatre iconography
22	Research on French mime
23	History of an international theatre festival in Italy, from the point of view of institutional, political, and economic history
25	Essay on Italian Renaissance theatre
28	Research on tap dance and women tap dancers
31	Research and costume design for a modern opera
32	Shows directed for an art and research institution
33	Directorial staging in an Asian country of a play by Bertolt Brecht
34	Book on Summer Stock theatre
39	Research on African–American performers
40	Work for a book on Native–American theatre

**Figure 2: Main Projects Discussed by the Scholars Interviewed.** *Projects are listed in the order in which the interviews were conducted.*

In interviewing archivists and librarians, I covered most of the relevant performing arts archives and libraries in Italy and in the United States, as well as three important archives and libraries in France and in Belgium. The theatre scholars interviewed were users of most of these archives and libraries. The French institution, for example, had been highly used by the Italian scholars. Since the interviews with scholars focused on some of their research projects, I tried to contact the archivists and librarians who had worked with the scholars on those projects, although this was not always possible. The conversations with archivists and librarians focused on theatre research and their relationship with theatre scholars, but other topics often emerged to include a discussion of day-to-day operations and of the management of performing arts materials in general. Whenever possible, the interviews started with the discussion of a project that archivists and librarians had worked on, or were working on, in order to help a scholar or a group of scholars in their research.

Depending on the types of archives and libraries, the materials housed in them have different origins and uses. In performing arts archives and libraries, traditional sources are complemented by materials specific to the performing arts: for example, programs, playbills, posters, promptbooks, stage models, stage plans, marionettes, costumes, published and unpublished libretti, and

scores.<sup>13</sup> Most institutions house both archival and library materials in a variety of formats, which in some cases are managed by the same people. The background of the interviewees varies and shows several combinations of the following elements: experience as theatre practitioners; on-the-job training; academic degrees in archival or library science, theatre and performance studies, arts, musicology, sociology, and other disciplines.<sup>14</sup> Some of the archivists and librarians are also scholars who publish on their interests, and they were therefore able to provide additional insight. Figure 3, *Interviews with Archivists and Librarians*, provides a summary of information about the interviewees and about the libraries and archives where they work, listed in the order in which the interviews were conducted.

The archives and libraries analyzed have a variety of users. A large group is represented by university students in several fields and disciplines such as the performing arts, the arts, architecture, and fashion design (for example, interview 3), working on theses and dissertations. High numbers of established scholars use the most specialized archives and libraries (for example, interviews 6, 7, 30, 35, 37, and 41). Other significant groups of users are performing arts practitioners (for example, interviews 12, 13, and 36) and critics (for example, interview 17). Internal users are predominant in in-house archives of active theatres (for example, interviews 10 and 20). Other users are the members of the general public, especially in circulating collections (for example, interview 36), but also in archives and special collections (for example, interview 3).

13 On issues of arrangement and description, and cataloguing and classification of performing arts materials see, for example, Marini, "Sources and Methodology of Theater Research"; Nena Couch and Nancy Allen, "Performing Arts," in *The Humanities and the Library*, ed. Nena Couch and Nancy Allen, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London, 1993), pp. 173–211; Simon Trussler, *A Classification for the Performing Arts* (London, 1974); Richard Stone, "The Show Goes On! Preserving Performing Arts Ephemera, Or the Power of the Program," *Arts Library Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2000), pp. 31–35; Lee R. Nemchek, "Problems of Cataloging and Classification in Theater Librarianship," *Library Resources & Technical Services*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October/December 1981), pp. 374–85; Vincent Radermecker, "En matière d'art du théâtre, quelles archives, pour quelle vie, au sein d'un organisme vivant ou d'un centre d'archivage?" presented at the 24th International SIBMAS Conference, Rome, Italy, September 2002; Kevin Winkler, ed., *Their Championship Season: Acquiring, Processing and Using Performing Arts Archives* (New York, 2001).

14 Currently, to the best of my knowledge, there are no fully specialized educational programs for performing arts archivists and librarians, in contrast to what is available, for example, for film archivists.



<b>Interview Number</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Position and Type of Archives/Library</b>	<b>Past or Current Experience as Theatre Practitioner (when applicable)</b>
3	Italy	Head Archivist–historical archives of an active city theatre and theatre festival	
6	France	Director–performing arts division of a leading library, which houses both primary and secondary sources (same as interview 7)	
7	France	Reference/Special Collections Librarian–performing arts division of a leading library, which houses both primary and secondary sources (same as interview 6)	Musician
8 (joint interview)	Belgium	Reference/Special Collections Librarian, and researcher (two interviewees)–repository of a theatre research institute	
10	Belgium	Head Archivist–archives of an opera house	Singer
12	Italy	Director–performing arts library, which is part of a major national society and houses both primary and secondary sources (same as interview 13)	
13	Italy	Reference/Special Collections Librarian–performing arts library, which is part of a major national society and houses both primary and secondary sources (same as interview 12)	
17	Italy	Director–library/archives of an active city theatre in Italy	
20 (joint interview)	Italy	Head Archivist, historical archives, and Head Archivist, photographic archives (two interviewees)–active spoken-word theatre	
24	Italy	Head Librarian–library of a public university performing arts department and interdepartmental theatre centre	
26	Italy	Director–performing arts archives within an archives/library/museum supported by a foundation	

27	United States	Head Librarian/Archivist–independent performing arts library and museum, housing primary and secondary sources, and museum materials	
29	United States	Head Archivist–archives of a theatre festival	
30	United States	Archivist–archives of private impresarios	
35	United States	Curator–theatre special collections of the performing arts division of a leading library (same as interview 36)	
36	United States	Head Librarian–circulating collection of the performing arts division of a leading library (same as interview 35)	Dancer
37	United States	Research and Reference Librarian–performing arts special collections of a private university	Actor
38	United States	Subject Librarian–performing arts library in a private university	
41	United States	Director–special collections in the research institute of an art institution	

**Figure 3: Interviews with Archivists and Librarians.** *Summary of information about the archivists and librarians interviewed and about the libraries and archives where they work, listed in the order in which the interviews were conducted.*

## Performance

The focus of the work of theatre scholars and performing arts archivists and librarians is performance, which is an extremely complex phenomenon without an accepted definition. The complexity of defining performance arises because almost every human, and even animal, activity contains elements of representation, communication, and acting, and implies an exchange with an audience, either real or imagined. The work of Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman is a widely known example of how theatrical metaphors may be used in describing “the presentation of self in everyday life,” as he titled his most famous book.<sup>15</sup> So many examples of theatricality in everyday life come to mind that, as Marvin Carlson writes, “the very ubiquity of the theatrical in human life and culture—and, conversely, the apparent ability of theatre, as a human activity, to absorb all other human activities into itself—make it so varied and complex a phenomenon as to test the limits of any mode of critical understanding.”<sup>16</sup> Carlson also notes that “the term ‘performance’ has become extremely popular in recent years in a wide range of activities in the arts, in literature, and in the social sciences,”<sup>17</sup> and that the corpus of what has been written and said in this regard is almost overwhelming.

Among others, the two disciplines of theatre studies and performance studies, which are distinct, although overlapping at times, both look at performance in its many incarnations. Historically rooted in literary studies, theatre studies developed as an independent academic discipline throughout the last part of the nineteenth century and over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Today theatre studies programs exist in universities all over the world. Previously, the dramatic text was the only focus of academic studies, but once recognition was brought to the fact that the text is only one element of theatre and that performance is central, the discipline of theatre studies was born. R.W. Vince writes that: “For much of [the twentieth century], theatre

15 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, rev. ed. (New York, 1990 [1959]).

16 Marvin Carlson, “Foreword,” in *Approaching Theatre*, eds. André Helbo, J. Dines Johansen, Patrice Pavis, Anne Ubersfeld, Marvin Carlson, Marco De Marinis, Svend Erik Larsen, Ane Grethe Østergaard, Franco Ruffini, and Lars Seerberg, rev. trans. of *Théâtre : Modes d’approche* (1987; Bloomington, 1991), p. vii.

17 Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (1999; repr., London and New York, 1996), p. 1.

18 See Wisner P. Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre* (Cambridge, MA, 1954); and Erika Fischer-Lichte, “From Text to Performance: The Rise of Theatre Studies as an Academic Discipline in Germany,” *Theatre Research International*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 168–78. Specific interests that later converged into theatre studies may be traced much farther back. See R.W. Vince, “Theatre History as an Academic Discipline,” in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, eds. Thomas Postelwait and Bruce A. McConachie (1989; repr., Iowa City, IA, 2000), pp. 1–18.

researchers have struggled to distance themselves from literary critics and literary historians, to establish their discipline on the fact of theatrical performance rather than on that of dramatic text.”<sup>19</sup> Traditionally, there is a distinction between “theatre” and “drama,” which Ferdinando Taviani calls “*una dicotomia troppo generica*,”<sup>20</sup> too generic a dichotomy. Nena Couch and Nancy Allen note that “Theatre is often viewed as divided into two categories: drama, which is the literary component, and theatrical production, that which is related to performance. However, a strict separation of these two categories is inappropriate, since neither is fully realized without the other.”<sup>21</sup>

Performance studies is largely independent, but is still related to theatre studies and certainly influences the conception of theatre. Performance studies focuses on performance art (which “began to be recognized during the 1970s as an artistic mode in its own right”<sup>22</sup>) and on all other kinds of performance activities and fields such as circus and political performance.<sup>23</sup> Both theatre studies and performance studies interact with and build on many other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, and are “inherently interdisciplinary.”<sup>24</sup> Theatre in itself is interdisciplinary and theatrical productions almost always require a great amount of preparatory research involving different fields and disciplines.<sup>25</sup>

Performance is something that does not last, and this is exactly what fascinates theatre practitioners and scholars alike, and is understood and valued by archivists and librarians who work with performing arts materials. An Italian scholar, discussing his methodological approach, said that: “the sources for

19 Vince, p. 1.

20 Ferdinando Taviani, *Uomini di scena, uomini di libro: Introduzione alla letteratura teatrale italiana del Novecento [Stage Men, Literary Men: Introduction to Twentieth-Century Italian Dramatic Literature]*, rev. ed. (Bologna, Italy, 1997), p. 15.

21 Couch and Allen, p. 174.

22 Carlson, p. 79.

23 See Carlson, *Performance*. See also Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, rev. ed. (1988; repr., New York and London, 1994).

24 For a discussion of the term “inherently interdisciplinary,” see Julie Thompson Klein, *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity, and Interdisciplinarity* (Charlottesville, VA and London, 1996), p. 39. On the interdisciplinarity of theatre and performance studies, see, for example, Marvin Carlson, “Theatre History: Methodology and Distinctive Features,” *Theatre Research International*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 90–96; and Jill Dolan, “Producing Knowledges That Matter: Practicing Performance Studies Through Theatre Studies,” *The Drama Review*, vol. 40, no. 4 (Winter 1996), pp. 9–19. I am here using “interdisciplinary” as an overarching term; for a discussion of specific definitions related to the many types and levels of interdisciplinary research and activities, see, for example, Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit, 1990); and Lynn Westbrook, *Interdisciplinary Information Seeking in Women’s Studies* (Jefferson, NC and London, 1999).

25 See, for example, Baroncelli; R.H. O’Neill, *The Director as Artist: Play Direction Today* (New York, 1987); and Kahn, “Performing by the Book.”

theatre research are unlimited, performing arts cultures are unlimited. ... All this ... makes the ephemeral necessary, because without the ephemeral all the possible connections would not exist.”<sup>26</sup> A professor and costume designer interviewed in the United States remarked that she enjoys working in theatre, saying: “I don’t like it being there forever; I like the fact that it’s gone.”<sup>27</sup> Performances are inherently dynamic and ephemeral, instantaneously past, as is everything else that happens in life. As another Italian professor and director who was interviewed pointed out, everything is ephemeral, even when it does not physically disappear, because the contexts of its interpretation constantly change.<sup>28</sup> Any time we need to go back to a performance or series of performances, for purpose of inspiration, reconstruction, research, publicity, or other reasons, we are dealing with something that is no longer there, even if it ended five minutes ago, even if we were part of it as performers or spectators. At the same time, performances live in the memory of those involved, as well as in the places in which they were performed, and in the sources and traces they left behind.<sup>29</sup> As the dramatic text is only one aspect of performance, so the sources and traces of performances are only one way to know them.

### Highlights of Findings About Scholars

Over the years, the complexity of theatre studies has generated a multiplicity of theories and scholarly orientations, which are partially reflected in my data. Reinterpretations and entirely new points of view have emerged; theatre encompasses and reflects life, and its characteristics influence research approaches and tools. Several aspects of theatre research emerged from the sample analyzed, and may be grouped in overarching categories that cut across the data and encompass the specific issues addressed by the scholars. These categories are context, time, creativity, engagement, and interdisciplinarity.

26 “*La documentazione dei fatti spettacolari è infinita, le culture dello spettacolo sono infinite. ... Tutto questo ... fa sì che questo effimero sia necessario, perché se non ci fosse l’effimero non ci sarebbero tutti questi collegamenti possibili*” (interview 11); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” pp. 98–99. The English translation of all quotes is mine. Since literal translation is not always possible, I am including the original quotes in the notes to allow for comparison.

27 Ibid., p. 99 (interview 31).

28 Ibid., p. 97 (interview 18).

29 Among others, see Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*; and Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research.”

### *Context*

On the basis of the interviews conducted, the category of context emerged as a way to draw together several commonalities among scholars. The scholars, especially in the Italian interviews, explained their research approaches in depth and offered a very articulate discussion of the development and characteristics of theatre studies. Central to many of the interviews was an explanation of the new approach to history and theatre history. In different ways, all of the projects discussed in the interviews dealt with understanding, conveying, or recreating cultures, both past and contemporary. To conduct theatre research means paying very close attention to the overall context of the topics investigated, for example, the social, political, economic, and artistic contexts. The nature of the topics and the context in which each scholar operates influence the methods chosen by the scholars and their types of investigation. As pointed out in several interviews, there is not one single approach to theatre research, because there is not one single form of theatre. One of the achievements of theatre studies has been to make this understood and accepted.<sup>30</sup> Scholars are not interested in an abstract idea of theatre, but in its specific forms; there are “theatres” and not “Theatre.”<sup>31</sup> This type of approach is in line with that of scholars in other fields, particularly historians.<sup>32</sup> As part of understanding theatre in its specific incarnations, it is essential to understand and/or be engaged in theatre practice. One Italian scholar discussed how his experience as an actor helped him in his thinking and research, because “the theatre experience is necessary; no book can be a substitute for the fire of experience.”<sup>33</sup> Many of the scholars interviewed are, or have been in the past, directly involved in theatre practice – as directors, actors, playwrights, costume designers, and dancers – and everyone is in close contact with the reality of theatre. This involvement in practice also relates to the category of creativity, discussed below. One Italian interviewee remarked that: “The new historian works in close contact with theatre practice, with the artists. This proximity nourishes him.”<sup>34</sup>

30 See, for example, Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” in particular pages 73–74 (interviews 18 and 25).

31 *Ibid.*, p. 73 (interview 25).

32 See, for example, Lino Marini, *Stati, Culture. Due note sui domini sabaudi fra Cinque e Seicento* [*States, Cultures*], Estratto dagli Atti della Accademia delle Scienze dell’Istituto di Bologna, Classe di Scienze Morali, Anno 78°, Rendiconti, Vol. LXXII, 1983–1984 (Bologna, Italy, 1984).

33 “*Bisogna fare l’esperienza del teatro; non c’è libro che possa sostituirsi al fuoco dell’esperienza*” (interview 11); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 89.

34 “*Il nuovo storico non può non lavorare a stretto contatto con la pratica teatrale, con l’artista. Si nutre anche di questa prossimità*” (interview 22); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 89.

To fully understand the context of theatre, it is also important to look at the role of the audience and at its interaction with performance, since “performance does not exist without the audience’s participation.”<sup>35</sup> David Mayer has written that: “theatre is a collaborative social process which is invariably tied to immediate circumstances, each performance being distinct in audience and meanings reached by that audience from any previous or subsequent performance.”<sup>36</sup>

### *Time*

At different levels, both theatre and theatre research are characterized by a temporal dimension. This is discussed by the interviewees, and by scholars such as Richard Schechner<sup>37</sup> and Marcia Bates, who has written: “Theatre studies ... deals with behaviors enacted through time, with the unique mixture of skills ... of a community of people engaging in an activity.”<sup>38</sup> Theatre research deals with the times and contexts of the topics studied and is also affected by its own historical context.

Performances are dynamic, because they change and evolve. For example, the same show may be different at different stages of development<sup>39</sup> and in the context of one production.<sup>40</sup> Jim Shaw expresses how productions evolve: “During a theatrical run a stage production can undergo a range of changes and alterations. For practical reasons we refer to productions as singular—Brook’s *Dream*—but the reality is that productions evolve and the experience of witnessing the play at the beginning of a run may be very different from seeing the final performance.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the sources used in the study of theatre may also undergo transformation, and sometimes never become fixed. Scripts and costumes, for example, get reused and thus transformed over time.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, from the archival point of view, it is not always easy to draw the line between the management of active records within an organization and the point of capture in an archives.<sup>43</sup>

35 “[*Lo spettacolo*] non esiste senza la partecipazione dello spettatore” (interview 18); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 92.

36 David Mayer, electronic mail message to author, 26 January 2002.

37 See Schechner, *Performance Theory*.

38 Marcia Bates, electronic mail message to author, 27 July 2002.

39 Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 99 (interview 29).

40 *Ibid.*, p. 100 (interview 31).

41 Jim Shaw, “The Evolution of a Stage Production: Evidence From the Archives,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, Victoria BC, April 2003.

42 Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 96 (interviews 4, 5, and 16).

43 For this observation, I am indebted to an anonymous peer reviewer, whom I thank for their insightful comments and suggestions.

### *Creativity*

Theatre research has a creative side, because the scholars' understanding of theatre practice and their involvement with it permeate their scholarship. In the theatrical world, as two Italian professors separately remarked, "developing theories and studies is a form of theatre, too"<sup>44</sup> and "the intellectual can work alongside the artist."<sup>45</sup> "[Eugenio] Barba<sup>46</sup> says that [theatre] is a world parallel to the real one ... in which you have to re-arrange the things of life in a new order, a different order, but where all orders are possible. And therefore, from this stance, the intellectual can work alongside the artist."<sup>47</sup> As discussed in an earlier section, the ephemeral aspect of performance allows for creativity within scholarship. There is, once again, a link to the role of practice: for example, one American scholar and tap dancer said that she discovers connections as she dances.<sup>48</sup> Dancing is for her a source of information, a way to understand her topic in depth, and a way to make other people understand. For example, she opens her academic presentations by performing a brief example of tap dancing: "I didn't feel, ethically, that it was all right to write material that would make a reputation for me about an art form that nine-tenths of the people I spoke to thought wasn't any good or had ever seen. So I began to dance as a part of my theoretical presentations. And I have been doing that for a lot of years."<sup>49</sup> The creativity of theatre therefore reflects in scholarly work.

### *Engagement*

All the scholars interviewed showed a very strong engagement in research and passion for their topics. In many cases, the scholars described their investigation of particular subjects either as a life-long endeavour or at least as a process that took several years. An Italian professor and director pointed out that, when he is engaged in a research project, part of his mind is constantly

44 "Il teatro lo fa anche chi lo pensa" (interview 21); Marini, "Sources and Methodology of Theater Research," p. 105. This concept has also been stated by Taviani in *Uomini di scena, uomini di libro*.

45 "L'intellettuale può stare al fianco dell'artista" (interview 11); Marini, "Sources and Methodology of Theater Research," pp. 105 and 107.

46 Director Eugenio Barba is a theatre innovator and probably the best known student of Polish artist Jerzy Grotowski's. On Barba see, for example, Daniel Meyer-Dingräfe, ed., *Who's Who in Contemporary World Theater* (London and New York, 2000), s.v. "Barba, Eugenio."

47 "Barba dice [che il teatro è un mondo] parallelo a quello reale ... in cui bisogna ricomporre le cose della vita in un nuovo ordine, ordine diverso, essendo però infiniti gli ordini possibili. E quindi in questo senso l'intellettuale può stare al fianco dell'artista" (interview 11); Marini, "Sources and Methodology of Theater Research," pp. 106-107.

48 Marini, "Sources and Methodology of Theater Research," p. 107 (interview 28).

49 Ibid., p. 94 (interview 28).



thinking about the topic, receptive to any possible hints<sup>50</sup>: “It is as if you were a hunter: the traces may seem lost ... but suddenly they appear some place else. Of course, it is like part of your brain has always stayed hooked on what you are looking for and you are constantly expecting it to come out.”<sup>51</sup> Constant intellectual engagement and curiosity favour browsing, which is an important information seeking activity and plays a role in how theatre scholars look for their sources.<sup>52</sup> Engagement and curiosity also favour serendipity: “serendipitous discoveries are made by researchers whose minds are educated and open”<sup>53</sup>; they are not just accidental discoveries.<sup>54</sup> Other aspects of the scholars’ constant engagement in research are an ongoing and dynamic tension in the interpretation of sources<sup>55</sup> and what some interviewees discussed as detective work.<sup>56</sup> An Italian scholar remarked: “I have always made a comparison with ... mystery/crime literature. ... To go into an archives is sometimes like conducting a police investigation: you start from small clues. ... It is the entire inductive method of Sherlock Holmes.”<sup>57</sup> This scholar linked his way of conducting research to the idea of material history: “we are children of a model of material history; to work on objects ... material history outside any idealism.”<sup>58</sup> All the interviewed scholars appeared to work with others in various degrees and capacities.<sup>59</sup> Theatre practice involves collaboration and this fact is reflected in theatre scholarship. One Italian scholar remarked: “I have tried to build bridges ... because I do not like isolation ... I

50 Ibid., pp. 110–111 (interview 16).

51 “È come un cacciatore: le tracce sono come perse ... però improvvisamente rispuntano da un'altra parte. Naturalmente è come se un pezzo della tua testa fosse rimasto agganciato da quell'altra parte e come che tu costantemente ti aspetti che venga fuori” (interview 16); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 111.

52 Ibid., p. 5. About browsing, see Marcia Bates, “The Design of Browsing and Berrypicking Techniques for the Online Search Interface,” *Online Review*, vol. 13, no. 5 (October 1989), pp. 407–24.

53 “I casi di serendipity si verificano quando hai degli scienziati con la mente preparata” (interview 25); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 112.

54 Ibid., pp. 111–13. About serendipity, see Theodore G. Remer, ed., *Serendipity and the Three Princes: From the “Peregrinaggio” of 1557* (Norman, OK, 1965).

55 Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” pp. 118–19 (interviews 4, 16, 22, and 25).

56 Ibid., pp. 114–18 (in particular, interview 25).

57 “Ho sempre fatto il confronto con ... la letteratura poliziesca ... vai in un archivio: devi fare un'indagine poliziesca, parti da un dato minimo. ... È tutto il metodo induttivo di Sherlock Holmes” (interview 25); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” pp. 116–17.

58 “In questo siamo figli, veramente, di un modello di storia materiale; lavorare sugli oggetti ... la storia materiale al di fuori degli idealismi” (interview 25); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 117.

59 Ibid., pp. 119–27.

like connection.”<sup>60</sup> A full discussion of how theatre scholars compare to other groups of scholars cannot be addressed in this article, due to space constraints. However, it may be generally stated that theatre research combines aspects comparable to research in the humanities, in the social sciences, in the arts, and in the sciences.<sup>61</sup> Theatre research, though, stands on its own because of the uniqueness of the phenomenon studied, theatrical performance, and because of the involvement with theatre practice.

### *Interdisciplinarity*

As discussed earlier, theatre and theatre research are interdisciplinary. The scholars interviewed come from different educational backgrounds, have different interests and research problems, use tools and methods from different disciplines, merge disciplines together in order to develop new approaches and solutions to problems, work with artists and scholars from other fields, and operate across cultures. The interdisciplinarity of theatre studies derives from the complexity of its object of study. Theatre scholars need preparation in various fields, as Bates points out: “It is because the performance is a community activity that the research requires an understanding of so many contributing arts such as costume design and set design.”<sup>62</sup>

### *Sources Sought and Used by Scholars*

It is impossible to list all sources needed for theatre research. Sources may be housed in many types of archives, libraries, special collections, and museums. They may still be in the hands of the creators without being formally organized; they may be in private collections, or in quite unexpected locations. Buildings and places, and the people who were involved in the performances and events studied (such as performers, directors, technicians, and audience members) may also be sources. In some cases, scholars rely on their own skills, first-hand knowledge and experience, and become sources themselves. Sometimes the sources do not exist, because they were not created in the first place, or because they were destroyed. Some scholars remarked on what can actually be learned from absence,<sup>63</sup> which needs to be interpreted and accounted for in theatre research. For example, one Italian professor said that although absence may be a problem, it might also offer clues. The reasons

60 “*Io ho cercato di stabilire dei ponti ... perché non mi piace l’isolamento ... mi piace il collegamento*” (interview 11); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 120.

61 For a detailed discussion and comparison with other groups, see Chapter VII in Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” pp. 184–95.

62 Marcia Bates, electronic mail message to author, 23 November 2001.

63 Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” pp. 114–18.

why some things were left undocumented or unsaid may lead the researcher to explain what is behind the phenomenon investigated.<sup>64</sup> In discussing historical sources, another Italian professor pointed out that “what is widely known within a specific historical and cultural context is usually left unsaid, with all the big problems that derive from this omission.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Highlights of Findings About Archivists and Librarians**

Granted that the specific instances are sometimes different and present a complementary point of view, most of what I have discussed – including the five categories of context, time, creativity, engagement, and interdisciplinarity – also applies to the archivists and librarians interviewed in the study. Context finds a place in the management of sources and in reference work. Time is mostly present when it comes to ensuring the documentation of theatre and to gathering available sources before they disappear. Engagement is especially evident in the archivists’ and librarians’ activity of promoting the use of sources, and in their involvement with theatre practice. Creativity and interdisciplinarity are intertwined in the entire discussion.

### ***Context***

Performing arts archivists and librarians operate within several related contexts: the overall context of the governing principles of their professions; the context of the archives or library in which they work; the context of creation of the sources; and the context of the interaction with the users conducting their inquiries and investigations.

Many interviewees, as discussed earlier, manage both primary and secondary sources in all formats (for example, interviews 6, 7, 12, 13, and 27), and, even when they currently deal with secondary sources only, they have usually had prior experience with the primary sources held by their institutions. For example, the American librarian working with the circulating collection of a leading performing arts library (interview 36) was previously in charge of the theatre special collections. I plan to address the application of traditional archival and library principles in the context of the performing arts more extensively in future writings.<sup>66</sup>

64 Ibid., p. 115 (interview 11).

65 “*L’ovvio non si dice ... con tutti i grossi problemi che ne conseguono*” (interview 25); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 114.

66 Performing arts materials present, at times, issues that have also been recognized in other contexts. For example, see Catherine Hobbs, “The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals,” *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001), pp. 126–35; and Jim Burant, “Ephemera, Archives, and Another View of History,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995), pp. 189–98.

Depending on the characteristics of the archives and libraries in which they work, archivists and librarians described varying degrees of control over the sources held. For example, stronger control is possible when the sources are no longer in use by their creators, compared to the theatres and festivals where materials get consulted or reused for new productions and, in some cases, never entirely cease to be active. In working theatres, conflicts may arise between the archives and the different departments, which do not always transfer what they should, or return materials requested for internal exhibitions, in a timely manner. Active theatres and festivals are often more focused on day-to-day operations. In these cases, archives are not a priority, resulting, at times, in inadequate support and missed opportunities.

Archivists and librarians need to have a thorough understanding of the context of creation of the materials that they manage. This is one of the areas in which interdisciplinary skills and knowledge play a role. In order to manage the materials and provide adequate service, it is essential to know when, why, and by whom the sources were created. This information is particularly relevant to scholarly users and to practitioners whose work relies heavily on research such as costume and set designers. Besides their own professions, archivists and librarians need to understand, at least to a degree, the disciplines and fields relevant to the creators and to the users, including theatre history, theory, and practice. Expertise in the arts is required, for example, when identifying paintings, drawings, and sketches and discussing them with the users (for example, interview 41), and technical knowledge is needed when explaining lighting or stage plans (for example, interview 3).

Archivists and librarians must understand the fonds and collections that they preserve and provide access to. Performing arts archivists and librarians are therefore researchers.<sup>67</sup> As mentioned earlier, they are highly skilled subject specialists, with advanced degrees and/or years of experience on the job, and some have experience as theatre practitioners. The comprehensive knowledge that archivists and librarians have of their fonds and collections allows them to point out internal and external connections that users would not otherwise be able to see. Archivists and librarians help scholars broaden their focus and become their allies in the interpretation process (for example, interview 37). Mayer has remarked that: “Good theatre librarians ... understand how theatre scholars work on ‘the event’ as well as on ‘the production’ and ‘the performance’, and they are receptive to evidence which helps to increase understanding of the event.”<sup>68</sup> Archivists and librarians often succeed in solving problems encountered by the scholars in their research. An Italian

67 The view of archivists as researchers is addressed in archival literature, for example in Elizabeth Yakel, “Thinking Inside and Outside the Boxes: Archival Reference Services at the Turn of the Century,” *Archivaria* 49 (Spring 2000), pp. 140–60.

68 David Mayer, electronic mail message to author, 26 January 2002.

professor and director said: “Sometimes I am lost and I cannot find the solution to a problem ... [but] I know archivists that can get me out of trouble and tell me where the sources that I am looking for are. It is like being a detective who has his informant friends.”<sup>69</sup> Close collaboration usually takes place in archives and special collections, where, as one American interviewee remarked, patrons need to be taken by the hand, while in circulating collections librarians have to point to resources in a meaningful way (interview 36). Even in circulating collections, though, a close relationship with librarians is very important in order for users to become aware of all available resources; in this respect, another American interviewee joked that he would like to establish a program called “Take a librarian out to lunch” (interview 38).

### *Time*

When performing arts archivists and librarians try to secure and acquire materials, to some degree they are always involved in a temporal process, which may become a race against time. Australian performing arts librarian Richard Stone writes that:

Common to all the performing arts is a progression from creative impulses and inspiration, to preparation and execution, to the ultimate performance/s before an audience. At any point in this process objects, documents and publications are generated. All of them are potential for heritage consideration, for being collected and preserved.<sup>70</sup>

If not secured in a timely manner, many of these materials may disappear, therefore all archivists and librarians interviewed are active in gathering existing sources (for example, interviews 3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 26, and 29). For instance, they seek and acquire new fonds from individuals, artists, and institutions; they create files of reviews and newspapers clippings; and they ask theatres and companies for programs and other documentation. In-house archivists solicit internal departments for their materials. In this context, archivists may have a role in ensuring that rights be clearly assigned at the outset and then properly retained.<sup>71</sup> Depending on the type of contract, materials such as sketches, stage models, or negatives of photographs may be the property of the theatre or the property of the artist who created them (for example, interviews 3, 10, and 20), and there are cases in which the attribution of rights is controversial.

69 “*Certe volte non riesco a cavarmela su certi problemi ... mentre invece conosco degli archivisti che mi tirano fuori d’impiccio e mi dicono dov’è [quello che cerco]. È un po’ come un detective che ha qualche amico informatore in un angolo*” (interview 16); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 164.

70 Stone, “The Show Goes On!,” p. 31.

71 This issue is also addressed in museum archives; see, for example, Deborah Wythe, ed., *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 2004).

The interviewees said that it is necessary to carry out a concerted effort to document theatrical productions and performances, since some materials may not come into existence if their creation is not promoted in the first place. Although, as I mentioned earlier, there is a strong debate about performance documentation and its limitations, the interviewees pointed out that it is an important activity for the survival of the artistic, social, and historical memory of theatre (for example, interview 8). In archival theory and practice, there is discussion surrounding the active role of archivists, which has been supported by some and questioned by others within the context of the views expressed on “documentation strategy.”<sup>72</sup> In the performing arts, a proactive approach seems to be a reality, which emerges in an almost necessary way from the characteristics of theatre and performances. For instance, the interviewees working in active theatres are often involved with the artistic direction in arranging recordings of performances (for example, interview 17).

All interviewees truly understand theatre practice. Being close to practice allows archivists and librarians to effectively gather materials and provide service to users. It also enables communication with theatre artists and practitioners, who, in some cases, “prefer not to preserve,”<sup>73</sup> as one French interviewee remarked, for fear that the performance may lose its vitality. For both artistic and practical reasons, the process of creation does not always seem compatible with an immediate desire for documentation, which may come at a later stage. Although many companies and artists produce recordings of their shows for their own use, they do not always document more extensively, nor wish to cooperate with archivists, librarians, and performing arts scholars. There are of course those who *are* interested in documenting their work, such as the internationally acclaimed American theatre artist Robert Wilson.<sup>74</sup> By relying on their own creativity, archivists and librarians may understand and address the different instances and types of artists’ needs.

72 On the documentation strategy process see, for example: Helen W. Samuels, “Who Controls the Past?” *American Archivist*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Spring 1986), pp. 109–124, and *Varsity Letters* (Lanham, MD and London, 1998). See also Richard J. Cox, “The Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles: A Different Perspective,” *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994), pp. 11–36, and *American Archival Analysis* (Metuchen, NJ and London, 1990), especially Chapter Thirteen (pp. 291–303). See also Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago, 2005), see “Documentation Strategy.”

73 “*Préfèrent ne pas garder*” (interview 6); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 171.

74 The documentary *Absolute Wilson*, directed by Katharina Otto-Bernstein (USA/Germany, 2006), provides useful examples of Wilson’s interest in documentation. Wilson maintains his own archive; he has also donated videos of his performances to the Theatre on Film and Tape Archive of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and part of his papers to the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscripts Library. See “The Robert Wilson Archive,” <http://www.robertwilson.com/archive/overview.php> (accessed 1 March 2007).

### *Engagement*

The involvement with theatre practice is one aspect of the passionate and active engagement of performing arts archivists and librarians in their work. Another very relevant aspect is how they promote the use of the sources that they manage. One Italian archivist remarked that:

The archives has to be alive; it has to be an active entity for everybody ... If its existence is not known, if it does not coexist with the city, the people, the scholars ... it is a dead archives. And theatre cannot be a dead issue; on the contrary, it has to make people understand what is out there, convey the possibility to do and discover things.<sup>75</sup>

An American interviewee similarly remarked that archivists and librarians have to make sure that the sources they acquire are used (interview 41). This special collections librarian works within an art institution and, on the occasion of an exhibition, promoted a research initiative that led to a theatre show, which was developed with and directed by one of the American professors interviewed (interview 32). The professor used materials from the exhibition and the museum collections to design the show, which combined narration, music, and stage performance.

In the Italian library/archives of an active city theatre (interview 17), the director and staff initiated a series of research projects, leading to scholarly publications. They invited scholars to use their materials in order to investigate topics related to the town where the theatre is located. One of the Italian scholars interviewed (interview 25) had taken part in this initiative and he discussed the book that he wrote on local theatre management in the nineteenth century.

Some archives and libraries also organize seminars and conferences (interview 17), put out series of CDs (interview 17), and issue periodical publications (interview 30) or are involved in other publication efforts (interview 26).

All of these examples represent creative ways to put sources to use. Archivists and librarians engage communities, promoting and increasing the use of the materials they hold. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, creativity and interdisciplinarity are present in everything that the archivists and librarians do, and are therefore intertwined in the discussion above and not addressed separately.

75 *“L’archivio deve vivere, deve essere un nucleo attivo con tutti quanti ... Se non è conosciuto, se non convive con la città, con le persone, con gli studiosi ... è un archivio morto. E il teatro non deve assolutamente essere un discorso morto, anzi deve far capire agli altri tutto quello che c’è, la possibilità proprio di fare, di scoprire”* (interview 3); Marini, “Sources and Methodology of Theater Research,” p. 174.



### Some Closing Reflections and Future Research

From the study, it has emerged that theatre scholars and performing arts archivists and librarians share many similarities. Performance, with its dynamic characteristics, is at the centre of their work and they are very passionate about what they do. As discussed above, they are all researchers, and the context of their work is essential to both groups. The need for being proactive is another common element, and the scholars, too, are sometimes engaged in promoting the creation of sources or gathering existing ones. An understanding of and involvement in theatre practice are key, and both groups work closely with theatre artists, sharing interdisciplinarity and creativity.

It is important to reflect on these commonalities and their implications in order to strengthen the dialogue among communities, to increase the degree of collaboration that already exists, and to promote reciprocal understanding. Further harmonizing the work of scholars with that of archivists and librarians, as well as that of theatre practitioners, would offer intellectual, artistic, and practical advantages, including better funding and recognition at the policy level.

Much can be learned from the vitality and complexity of theatre and performance. What scholars, archivists, and librarians do in this context may provide powerful tools for addressing many issues that are at the forefront of current discussions, such as the proliferation of dynamic and interactive media, and the attempt to define what information is. In the specific context of archival research and practice, what performing arts archivists do may offer new insight and tools to the profession. Performing arts archives are dynamic entities, as lively as the field that they support. The archival profession is increasingly recruiting archivists who are able to manage dynamic records, work closely with the records creators, collaborate with librarians and other practitioners in related fields, be attentive to the users, be involved with education and outreach, and have a strong knowledge of technology. Performing arts archivists do all of this,<sup>76</sup> and may offer a useful model for those practitioners who are dealing with digital materials, and for those who are reinterpreting their professions. Records related to performance are being examined in the context of major archival research projects, such as InterPARES2, in which much has been learned from the analysis of the

76 See Francesca Marini, "The Identity of the Profession: Representing Ourselves to Funding Agencies and the Public," paper presented at the 26th International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts (SIBMAS) Congress, Vienna, Austria, August 2006.



performing arts.<sup>77</sup> Performance has also recently become a lens for revisiting key concepts of archives and the role of archivists within the context of post-modern thinking,<sup>78</sup> and has emerged as a way of looking at records in the digital environment.<sup>79</sup> Whether attending conferences or contributing to professional literature, archivists and librarians who specialize in specific types of materials such as personal papers appear to be seeking more and more recognition. They share similarities, like the need to be proactive, with performing arts archivists and librarians, who, once again, might become catalysts for increased awareness. The archival and library professions are starting to embrace the performing arts, including them in a more widely accepted theoretical and practical discourse. In a late 1970s piece in *Archivaria*, Canadian performing arts archivist Joan Baillie of the Canadian Opera Company asked the broad archival community for more support in maintaining and preserving the records of Canadian artistic history.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, at the beginning of my study in the early 2000s, one of my goals was to elicit a more widespread interest in the performing arts among the members of the archival and library communities. In these last few years, it appears that this interest has started to emerge. To a degree, this is happening in response to issues raised by the digital environment and, in part, because the international efforts of performing arts archivists and librarians are starting to pay off. Great credit goes to professional associations and groups such as the International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts (SIBMAS),<sup>81</sup> the Theatre Library Association (TLA),<sup>82</sup> the Society of American Archivists' Performing Arts Roundtable (PAR),<sup>83</sup> and the

77 InterPARES2 (International Research on Permanent Authentic Records in Electronic Systems 2); <http://www.interpares.org> (accessed 1 March 2007). See also Luciana Duranti and Kenneth Thibodeau, "The Concept of Record in Interactive, Experiential and Dynamic Environments: The View of InterPARES," *Archival Science*, vol. 6, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 13–38.

78 See, for example, Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science*, vol. 2, nos. 3–4 (September 2002), pp. 171–85; and Tom Nesmith, "Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives," *The American Archivist*, vol. 65, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002), pp. 24–41.

79 See, for example, Luciana Duranti, "La questione fondamentale: in quali entità digitali si traduce la memoria del futuro?" *Archivi e Computer*, vol. XVI, no. 1 (2006), pp. 24–31.

80 Joan Baillie, "Some Performance!," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979–80), pp. 229–32.

81 Société internationale des bibliothèques et des musées des arts du spectacle/International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts (SIBMAS), <http://www.sibmas.org/> (accessed 1 March 2007). SIBMAS was established in 1954 in France, and operates mostly at the European and North American level.

82 The Theatre Library Association (TLA) was established in 1937 and operates mostly at the North American level, <http://tla.library.unt.edu/> (accessed 1 March 2007).

83 The Society of American Archivists' Performing Arts Roundtable (PAR) was established in 1986, <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/performart/index.html> (accessed 1 March 2007).

Performing Arts Special Interest Group of Museums Australia (PASIG).<sup>84</sup> These individual efforts benefit from what appears to be an increased interest in the performing arts internationally at the government level. In France, for example, a study on the sources for live theatre has been recently conducted and published.<sup>85</sup> The study is based on a survey of performing arts holdings in French repositories. In 2006, the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS)-Performing Arts in the United Kingdom published a scoping study on the creation and use of digital resources in the performing arts.<sup>86</sup>

Notwithstanding this overall increased level of interest, much still needs to be done to fully integrate the knowledge of performing arts archivists and librarians within their broader professional communities. The communication with performing arts scholars and artists also needs to be improved. Some of the other themes that have emerged are worth further investigation, such as issues of arrangement and description of performing arts materials, ethical and artistic considerations in documenting and preserving performances, and knowledge requirements for archivists preserving live theatre. Issues of arrangement and description of performing arts materials are relevant, for example, in the new digital context, and find a place in the ongoing debate on audiovisual and non-textual materials. These materials do not always fit the categories delineated by traditional archival theory and practice, and their complex characteristics are contributing to the understanding of digital dynamic and interactive records.<sup>87</sup> A focus on ethical and artistic considerations in documenting and preserving performances may contribute to the debate on performance documentation and fits in well with the ongoing debate on ethical issues in archives and libraries.<sup>88</sup> To a degree, it also fits in with the postmodern debate on archives, and with the idea that archives are as

84 The Performing Arts Special Interest Group of Museums Australia (PASIG) was established in the early 1990s; <http://amol.org.au/pasig/> (accessed 1 March 2007). The above-mentioned associations also work with scholarly theatre associations such as the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR), <http://www.astr.org/>; The Society for Theatre Research (STR), <http://www.str.org.uk/>; and the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR)/Fédération internationale pour la recherche théâtrale (FIRT), <http://www.firt-iftr.org/firt/home.jsp> (all accessed 1 March 2007).

85 Emmanuel Wallon, *Sources et ressources pour le spectacle vivant—Rapport au ministre de la Culture et de la Communication*, 2 vols. and appendixes (Paris, February 2006), <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/index-rapports.htm> (accessed 1 March 2007).

86 Daisy Abbott and Emma Beer, *Getting to Know Our Audience: AHDS Performing Arts Scoping Study* (Glasgow, July 2006), <http://ahds.ac.uk/performingarts/pubs/scoping-study-2006.pdf> (accessed 1 March 2007).

87 See, for example, Duranti and Thibodeau, “The Concept of Record.”

88 Among the many existing works on the subject, see, for example, Karen M. Benedict, *Ethics and the Archival Profession: Introduction and Case Studies* (Chicago, 2003); and Richard J. Cox, *Ethics, Accountability, and Recordkeeping in a Dangerous World* (London, 2006).

much about remembering as they are about forgetting.<sup>89</sup> Investigation of knowledge requirements for archivists preserving live theatre could delineate both existing and desired requirements based on current practice and on research to date. This interest fits in well with the current debate on the characteristics of the new archivists and librarians, which has been raised on several occasions, including the Association of Canadian Archivists 2006 conference.<sup>90</sup>

There are great possibilities for future research and applications. What is done in the performing arts may become a useful model in many environments. The centuries-old idea of theatre as an educational tool and a source of information for life, combined with the powerful concept of performance, may help communities come together and open new horizons for the archival and library disciplines.

89 See, for example, Verne Harris, "A Shaft of Darkness: Derrida in the Archives," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (Cape Town, 2002), pp. 61–81.

90 See Marini, "The Identity of the Profession."