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Performing Africa

Remixing Tradition, Theatre, and Culture

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Performing Africa is a collection of essays on contemporary African performance. From 1992 to 2002, Thomas Riccio worked with several groups in South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania, West Africa, and Kenya - the Zulu and the !Xuu Bushmen of the Kalahari among them. *Performing Africa* combines a rare, in-the-field perspective with a keen insight into Africa's transformative and tumultuous confluence of tradition, urbanization, politics, history, and the AIDS crisis. The evolution of tradition and the emergence of dynamic new forms of expression are a matter of practical necessity and survival. An interdisciplinary approach and accessible language make *Performing Africa* a unique resource for those teaching or interested in the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology, drama therapy, theatre, performance, and African studies.

«Thomas Riccio's working methods vary, but the goal is always the same: to help local people understand, and above all appreciate, their own traditions and themselves as part of their culture - to make theatre starting with the people and culture to express them on their own terms. The work is done as a collective interaction, emphasizing physical expression, which makes people more available to a fuller sense of self, including 'spiritual things.' Through Riccio's work, forgotten and undervalued oral traditions find a new life and the community a renewed mechanism of communication.» (Suna Vuori, Helsingin Sanomat (Helsinki Messenger))

«Thomas Riccio's has had long experience working with indigenous peoples, and an ability to submerge himself in cultures other than his own, where that is closer to the arena of religious or spiritual experience, where the emphasis of both performer and viewer is on the experiential.» (Stephen Coan, The Natal Witness, Durban, South Africa)

«Thomas Riccio is a unique character, with his far-ranging theatre work travels. But he is also a harbinger, and a person who incarnates the intercultural problem/opportunity.» (Richard Schechner, Editor, The Drama Review)

The Author: Thomas Riccio is Professor of Performance Studies and Artistic Director of Story Lab at the University of Texas at Dallas where he works with the Institute for Interactive Arts & Engineering. He received his MFA from Boston University. His previous positions include Professor of Theatre at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Visiting Professor at the Korean National University for the Arts and the University of Dar es Salaam, Artistic Director of Chicago's Organic Theater Company, Dramaturg/Resident Director at the Cleveland Play House, and Associate Literary Director at the American Repertory Theatre at Harvard. He has directed over 100 stage plays, including productions at the National Theatre of Italy and Off Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway. His articles have appeared in numerous journals. His plays have been produced in the United States and internationally and he is a recipient of numerous grants and awards, most recently a «distinction prize» for playwrighting from the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation.