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Christopher B. Balme
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Introduction

When the Anglo-American theatre manager and actor Maurice E. Bandmann died of enteric fever at the Colonial Hospital in Gibraltar on 9 March 1922, shortly before his fiftieth birthday, the event was reported across the English-speaking world from Madras to Singapore and from Cairo to Hong Kong, with many newspapers carrying lengthy obituaries. *The Times of India* called him 'the pioneer of musical comedy in this part of the world', having 'brought to the East some forty or fifty companies'.[1] *The Straits Times* in Singapore claimed that 'he inaugurated the system that will remain as a monument to his memory in theatrical circles'.[2] *The Era*, London's theatrical trade paper, emphasized 'the fine plays and well-equipped companies he presented [which] became famous in all parts of the world, many stars appearing under his management, and the Bandman Opera Company, with all the latest musical comedy successes, was exceedingly popular everywhere in the East'.[3] As these statements indicate, Maurice Bandmann was at the time considered a key figure in what will be called in this book the globalization of theatre. For over two decades, Bandmann was a household name in the theatre world, a guarantor of quality itinerant theatrical entertainment and especially of musical comedy, performed by the legendary Bandmann Opera Company. The Bandmann Circuit, as it was known, extended from Gibraltar to Tokyo and included more than two dozen towns and cities across the Asian continent as well as

[1] 'Death of Mr Bandman: An Eastern Impresario', *The Times of India*, 11 March 1922, 12. After 1916, Bandmann's name was usually written with one 'n', and this spelling will be retained where used in quotations and cited sources.
[2] 'The Late Mr. M. E. Bandman: India's Greatest Amusement Provider', *The Straits Times*, 23 March 1922, 11.
[3] 'Death of Maurice E. Bandman', *The Era*, 22 March 1922, 8.

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occasional forays to the West Indies and even South America. In terms of sheer reach and territory covered, Bandmann was a global theatrical entrepreneur, who, while certainly concentrating on English-speaking settlements, also performed regularly in Japan to Japanese audiences, before Chinese in Shanghai and Peking and in numerous cities where audiences were linguistically mixed.

Yet the 'monument to his memory' remained short-lived, scarcely surviving beyond the closure of his companies. Despite his global reach and ubiquitous presence in the theatrical world of late colonialism, today he is largely forgotten, his name at best a footnote in the annals of musical comedy or Indian and Japanese theatre history. Although historiographical amnesia is common in theatre over the years and linked among other things to the ephemeral nature of theatrical performance, the Bandmann case is a special one because of the spatial and temporal extent of his presence. While theatrical touring outside the United Kingdom at the height of the age of empire was common, Bandmann developed it on a scale that was unprecedented. Western-style theatre reached places it had never been before and with a regularity that was new. This was transnational, flexible, highly mobile, tightly organized commercial theatre dependent on and responsive to culturally diverse and geographically dispersed publics.

Maurice Edward Bandmann was born in New York in 1872 as the second child of two prominent actor-managers, Daniel E. Bandmann and Millicent Bandmann-Palmer. After completing his schooling at a classical German *Gymnasium* in Wiesbaden, Bandmann entered the acting profession, touring with both his father in the United States and his mother in the United Kingdom. Although he quickly became an accomplished actor, he became known in theatrical circles in the 1890s as the youngest actor-manager in the business. It is his managerial career that marks a new phase in the organization of theatrical touring. Within a few years, he controlled four separate troupes in Britain and in 1897 joined forces with Malcolm Wallace to form the English Comedy Company to tour Gibraltar, Tangiers, Malta and Egypt, the first stage in building the circuit that was to extend east all the way to Japan and then westwards across the Atlantic to the West Indies.

After a first and somewhat unsuccessful foray into India in 1901, which coincided with the death of Queen Victoria and hence a temporary lack of interest in musical comedy, Bandmann took a light opera company to the West Indies. In 1902, he embarked on a tour to South America extending from Brazil to Peru, with a return route that included Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1905, Bandmann resumed operations in India

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and made Calcutta his headquarters; here he rapidly established a 'circuit', which by his own account took in 'Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, India, Burmah, with the Malay States, the Straits Settlements, China, Japan, Java and Philippine Islands'.[4] A calendar he issued to prospective theatres along the route in 1906 already figured him as a 'global player' positioned between ships, trains and different theatrical genres, his hand resting nonchalantly on a globe (see cover jacket). Bandmann built, owned, managed or leased numerous theatres along his circuit, thus extending commercial control over all aspects of theatre production and reception.

A stranger to modesty and an expert in self-advertisement, for over twenty years Bandmann and his name stood for high-quality theatrical entertainment aimed at European and local audiences alike. As a Singapore paper noted in 1906, 'the name of Bandmann is a sort of guinea stamp among itinerant theatrical circles'.[5] In 1900 he floated the Mediterranean and the East Entertainment Syndicate, his first joint-stock company. This was followed in 1914 by the Bandman Varieties Ltd, and some years later by the Bandman Eastern Circuit Ltd (he dropped the second, Germanic-looking 'n' from his name because of the war), which controlled his many interests, including cinema distribution. These were public companies listed on the Indian stock exchange.[6] Upon his premature death in 1922, his personal fortune was assessed at around £33,000, the equivalent of just under £1 million in today's currency, a modest fortune perhaps by impresario standards, but a fortune nonetheless. Despite his death, Bandman Varieties and the Bandman Eastern Circuit companies continued to operate in India well into the 1930s.

This book will focus on Bandmann's transnational theatrical networks and how they emerged, functioned and ultimately dissolved in the context of early globalization. These networks were based on theatrical touring, perhaps the most under-researched of the various manifestations of transnational, even global, theatre in the period under scrutiny. The focus of this book is threefold. Firstly, this volume covers the relational structures created by theatrical circuits operating around the turn of the century that were transitioning from the almost moribund actor-manager model to complex, syndicated systems of theatrical entrepreneurship such as the theatrical circuit established

[4] *Weekly Sun* (Singapore), 30 September 1911, 12.
[5] *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, 16 February 1906, 2.
[6] See 'Variety Theatres. Big Scheme for "All-Red Circuit"', *The Straits Times*, 10 March 1914, 2.

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by Bandmann. Secondly, the book examines how theatre responded to and participated in the processes known as the first phase of globalization – roughly the period extending from the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Aided by technological developments such as steamships, railways and telegraphic communication, this period saw an almost unprecedented expansion of peoples, empires and economic activity that led quite literally to global connectivity, with many parallels to current conceptions of globalization. It also saw an unprecedented expansion of theatre-building, the provision of theatrical infrastructure in which Bandmann was heavily involved. The third area concerns how spectators and performers responded to and were involved in this kind of theatrical globalization under conditions of mobility. For the former group the question is how did highly heterogeneous publics respond to the theatrical repertoire on offer? For the latter we need to ask how theatrical labour was organized under conditions of extreme duress – situations of propinquity lasting between eighteen months and two years – which sometimes resulted in legal action by employees and management.

These heterogeneous factors will be framed within the coordinates of network theory, a primarily sociological approach which is now beginning to be adapted for historical research. It offers a way to comprehend and analyse a complex of phenomena that combined affective (familial) interaction, commerce, theatrical repertoire, continual mobility, the politics of locality and legal disputes. Each of these elements comprises nodes in the network of performers on the move. If we apply the usual criteria for justifying arts-based research – the innovation and creativity of the artist and works – then Bandmann's companies provide little to interest the humanities scholar: his repertoire was derivative, essentially touring versions of London hits. The originality and uniqueness of the Bandmann enterprise was the network itself – its complex pattern of interconnected elements that had to mesh to succeed. The remarkable achievement is the sheer extent and complexity of a network that extended geographically from London to Japan and was held together by shipping timetables, a constant stream of telegrams, contracts, shifting jurisdictions and an indefatigable manager at the centre.

Theatrical Networks

The material presented in this book is almost entirely absent from theatre histories, lexica and archives. Why is this? And perhaps more importantly, how can one examine this material in such a way that its dynamics and interconnections become visible? I propose that network theory can offer

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a fruitful avenue for historiographical recuperation. There are, of course, as many network theories as there are networks: social, technological, biological, political and economic, to name only some. What connects most of these quite disparate concepts and theories is a common emphasis on relational structures. By definition, relational structures are changing configurations of agents and nodes that constitute relay points around which communication and interaction take place. Relational structures are dependent on the actions of other agents in the network. Some forms of network analysis attempt to plot these interconnections visually to demonstrate degrees of connectivity and tend to privilege aggregated data demonstrating multiple connections and correlations. Such connections take precedence over monocausal factors such as class, sex, clan membership or individual agency. This has been termed the 'anticategorical imperative', an approach which rejects attempts to explain human behaviour or social processes 'solely in terms of the categorical attributes of actors, whether individual or collective'.[7] This book will draw on two main strands of network theory and methodology: historical network analysis and actor-network theory (often playfully abbreviated as ANT).[8]

Historical network analysis adapts social network theory and applies it to historical phenomena. The former draws on both mathematical and economic approaches that have led in turn to the emergence of a branch of sociology which employs network theory as an analytical tool to explain economic behaviour. Sociologists such as Mark Granovetter have argued that networks can be divided into strong (homophilic) and weak (heterophilic) types. Strong networks such as extended families evince a high degree of homophily, a tendency to gravitate to people similar to ourselves. Granovetter's and many subsequent studies have, however, demonstrated that, generally speaking, heterophilic (or weak) ties are the more beneficial because a predominance of homophilic ties would lead to a highly fragmented world. In a society with relatively few weak ties, 'new ideas will spread slowly, scientific endeavours will be handicapped, and subgroups separated by race, ethnicity, geography, or other characteristics will have difficulty reaching a modus vivendi'.[9] In contrast, heterophilic networks, because of their reliance on weak ties, can much more easily form connections with other networks, a precondition for innovation and adaptation.

[7] Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, 'Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency', *American Journal of Sociology* 99(6) (May 1994): 1411–54, here 1414.
[8] See Charles Wetherell, 'Historical Social Network Analysis', *International Review of Social History* 43 (December 1998): 125–44.
[9] Mark Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited', *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983): 201–33, here 202.

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Almost all network theories work with concepts of nodes, edges and hubs (or their terminological equivalents). Nodes are entities (people, events, places, etc.) that stand in a relation of connectedness to other nodes. These connective relations are known as 'edges'. Hubs are usually understood as nodes with a particularly high degree of connectedness: they have an unusually large number of edges. Because edges can differ greatly in their intensity and degree of importance for a network, they are differentiated according to three main categories of centrality: *degree* centrality refers to the number of edges radiating from a specific node; *betweenness* centrality designates the importance of a specific node in a network (usually the number of connections it enables); while *closeness* centrality refers to the proximity of a node to other nodes (this might influence a person's access to information). According to Freeman, a high degree of betweenness centrality is necessary to control communication, which is of key importance, for example, to both a mother of a family and a theatrical entrepreneur.[10]

In his book *The Square and the Tower: Networks and Power, from the Freemasons to Facebook*, historian Niall Ferguson gives historical network analysis a new urgency. He offers an incisive review of network theory, both mathematical and sociological, before arriving at an oversimplified (as he states) distinction between hierarchies and networks.[11] His argument is the following: very broadly, historians have been overly focused on hierarchical structures because these leave behind the kinds of archives that historians like to study, whereas networks generally do not. Networks, on the other hand, tend to be more creative than hierarchies; we should expect a network-driven disruption of hierarchies that cannot reform themselves. Ferguson is aware that hierarchies are just a particular form of network with the special feature that they form nodes and edges in vertical rather than horizontal structures that index power and control. If we are looking for innovation, then we should be looking at the points of contact between diverse networks. His broad historical argument is that hierarchies are the dominant mode of governmentality between 1790 and 1970, the so-called corporate age. Recent times – since the 1970s – have seen a reassertion of network structures.

Aided by a growing selection of software, network analysis has become famous for its ability to visualize large amounts of data in order

[10] For this distinction explained in mathematical terms, see Linton C. Freeman, 'A Set of Measures of Centrality Based on Betweenness', *Sociometry* 40 (1977): 35–41; and 'Centrality in Social Networks: Conceptual Clarification', *Social Networks* 1 (1978/79): 215–39, here 226.

[11] Niall Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower: Networks and Power, from the Freemasons to Facebook* (New York: Penguin, 2018), xx.

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to demonstrate the various connections that exist between nodes: not only their relations to one another but also the degree or intensity of the relations.[12] Numerous studies have demonstrated the potential of visualizations to represent 'centrality' as previously defined. Historical network analysis enables us to plot ties, relations and connections. The argument put forward here is that the Bandmann Circuit was a complex network predicated on weak ties. We can see that the circuit, if we view it as a network and not just as a succession of ports of call, had multifarious edges (Fig. I.1). It intersected not just with the performers in the troupe but with venues, copyright holders, the stock market, colonial and municipal officials, and business partners. The elucidation of these varied and often complex connections is a central task of this book.

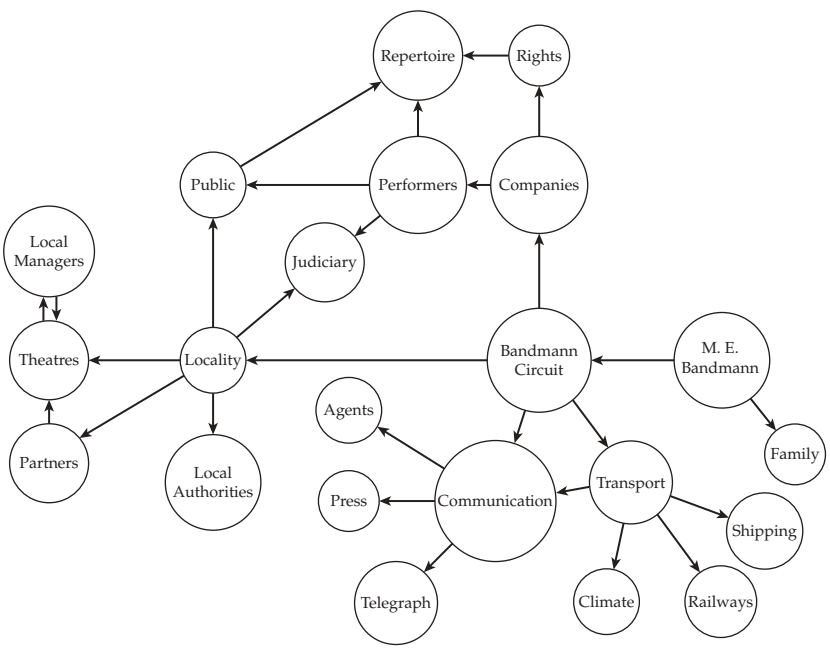

Figure I.1 A visualization of the Bandmann Circuit emphasizing its betweenness centrality.

[12] The origins of network visualization lie probably in J. L. Moreno's famous 'sociograms' of school children who were asked the simple question 'Who would you like to sit next to?' The results demonstrated a highly uneven distribution of affections between obvious class favourites and a few isolated loners. See www.martingrandjean.ch/social-network-analysis-visualization-morenos-sociograms-revisited/ (last accessed 1 April 2019).

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Historical network analysis has, however, some shortcomings. It does not model diachronic change well, nor is it particularly sensitive to interpretive ambiguity. The latter feature is one of the strengths of actor-network theory. Actor-network theory, or ANT, is a particular variant of social network analysis that emerged in the 1970s in the field of the sociology of science, or what is now known as science studies. It is linked to a group of French sociologists, the best known of whom is Bruno Latour, but also includes Michel Callon and the English sociologist John Law. Broadly and abstractly speaking, and at the risk of some simplification, ANT looks at interconnected networks of exchange known as actor networks. Actor networks consist in turn of interrelated nodes and actants in which human beings are as much relational effects as initiating, all-controlling subjects.[13] The revolutionary and controversial move of ANT has been to make non-social entities – microbes and scallops, to cite two famous examples – into actors. From objects being acted upon by conventional social actors (i.e. human beings), they were re-conceptualized as part of a network in which, under certain circumstances, they are seen to have considerable agency. The multiple perspectives and descriptive imperatives of ANT can help us rethink the complex relationships between theatrical trading, imperial formations and an understanding of what it meant to circulate and perform theatre in the first age of globalization.

Theatre and performance studies have engaged energetically with ANT in recent years as opposed to historical network analysis, which has largely been ignored. This is probably because, as Laura Smith-Doerr and Walter Powell argue, actor-network theory 'stresses the process of translation, in which problems are redefined, supporters mobilized, and ideas and practices transformed in *the process of interpretation*' (my emphasis).[14] Marlis Schweitzer and Leo Cabranes-Grant have both demonstrated how actor-network theory can be productively employed for theatre history. In her book *Transatlantic Broadway: The Infrastructural Politics of Global Performance*, Schweitzer examines 'the transnational performances of ocean liners, piers, telegraph cables, telegrams, typewriters, office spaces, newspapers, and postcards' and

[13] The term 'actant' is a terminological residue of Greimasian semiotics that exerted a considerable influence on Latour and his group in the early period of research in the 1970s. It refers to any forces that exert agency within a network, ranging from natural forces to individuals and collective bodies.

[14] Laurel Smith-Doerr and Walter W. Powell, 'Networks and Economic Life', in Neil Smelser and Richard Swedberg, eds., *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; Russell Sage Foundation, 2005), 379–402, here 42.

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asks how these objects, 'as participants in a series of complicated networks, transformed the machinery of US theatre as well as the everyday practices of those who produced and consumed it'.[15] Cabranes-Grant has demonstrated persuasively how ANT can be harnessed to explain 'ethnographically' historical intercultural encounters – in this case in early modern Mexico. Both Schweitzer and Cabranes-Grant recognize that Latour's interest in the performative aspect of actor networks, where agents modify a relation in the act of connection, is especially productive for theatre and performance studies. For Cabranes-Grant, Latour's actor-network theory is attractive 'because it portrays the social as poiesis, a series of labors. ANT provides a methodology of transitions, a critical discourse in which cultural structures are manifestations of flow: not closure.'[16]

Methodologically, actor-network theory can be considered a form of ethnography where techniques and practices of fieldwork and participant observation are applied to contemporary society and its many fields. Latour states that ANT is 'simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology'.[17] Darryl Cressman refers to ANT's 'ethnographic bent: micro-level studies of the labs and boardrooms tracing how actors exert influence over the trajectory of scientific and technical innovation'.[18] Since ethnography tends to focus on the present, the question poses itself how theatre historians can extend such insights gathered from present-day laboratories and boardrooms and make them useful for their concerns. And does not ANT have tautological implications for theatre, not the least of which is the term 'actor', but more so because theatre is intrinsically 'social' on account of its conditions of collaborative production and collective reception? If we simply revisit the usual objects of theatre research – plays, performances, performers, audiences and occasionally theatre buildings – then there is a real danger that we simply reformulate old insights with new metaphors. A more productive application of actor-network theory would require a

[15] Marlis Schweitzer, *Transatlantic Broadway: The Infrastructural Politics of Global Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

[16] Leo Cabranes-Grant, *From Scenarios to Networks: Performing the Intercultural in Colonial Mexico* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 25. For a cogent discussion of actor-network theory in relation to theatre history, see also Gero Tögl, *The Bayreuth Enterprise 1848–1914* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2017).

[17] Bruno Latour, 'On Recalling ANT', in John Law and J. Hassard, eds., *Actor-Network Theory and After* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 15–26, here 19.

[18] Darryl Cressman. 'A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation', here 7. www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/cmns/research/centres/cprost/recentpapers/2009/0901.pdf (last accessed 1 April 2019).

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recalibration of epistemological assumptions regarding why we do not know anything about Maurice E. Bandmann and his global activities. If the *person* did not register in the theatre historical archive, then perhaps his circuit might. An ANT perspective would force us to concern ourselves more with the network than with the biographical person of Maurice Edward Bandmann. As Schweitzer states, an actor-network approach leads to a concern with objects and processes such as shipping and railway networks. To her list we could add newspapers, advance agents, the colonial judiciary, storms and tropical heat.[19] Actants would include texts, companies of performers, contracts and even courts, all of which acted upon each other in 'webs of relations'.[20]

Although one has not needed network theory to study Shakespeare, for example, the same cannot be said, I argue, for Maurice Bandmann's now forgotten 'circuit' and indeed the whole branch of itinerant theatrical activity, which is also largely overlooked and often not even recorded in our theatre archives.[21] While we can certainly map the activities of Bandmann and his many colleagues onto commonly understood historical processes such as commodification, imperial expansion and colonial power structures, in this book they will be viewed from the perspective of connectivity.[22] In the chapter entitled 'First Move: Localizing the Global' of his book *Reassembling the Social*, Latour emphasizes the importance of examining connectivity itself:

> We have to lay continuous connections leading from one local interaction to the other places, times, and agencies through which a local site is made to do something. This means that we have to follow the path indicated by the process of delegation or translation.[23]

[19] On the networked newspaper in this period, see G. M. Winder, 'Imagining Geography and Citizenship in the Networked Newspaper: "La Nación" Reports the Assassination at Sarajevo, 1914', *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, Special Issue, 35(1) (2010): 140–66.

[20] John Law, 'Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics', in Bryan S. Turner, ed., *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 141–58, here 141.

[21] There is, for example, no entry on Bandmann in the standard four-volume reference work *Who Was Who in the Theatre: 1912–1976. A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Directors, Playwrights, and Producers of the English-Speaking Theatre* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1978). There is also currently no Wikipedia entry on him.

[22] Other theatre entrepreneurial networks are better known, such as J. C. Williamson in Australia and I. W. Schlesinger's African Theatre Trust in South Africa. Nevertheless, the method I propose here could be used to analyse them as well.

[23] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 173.

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