

Roche examines Irish theatre from 1899 until the death of W. B. Yeats on the grounds that 'Yeats self-consciously and determinedly set the agenda for the Irish dramatic revival'. He reads the plays presented at the Abbey Theatre during Yeats' lifetime as inevitably offering a response to Yeats' concept of Irish national identity. In the last chapter Roche shares his monograph with three other writers, Paige Reynolds, P. J. Matthews, and the playwright Conor McPherson, who provide their own thoughtful and reflective commentary on the period. This structure is innovative and revealing, since it allows the reader a further perspective on Roche's own assessment of the revival. His analysis is read as part of a continuing critical dialogue about the period among the dramatists he has discussed, critics, and a contemporary playwright. As Roche notes, 'Theatre is never the creation of one person', and, as his volume reminds us, neither is criticism – academics, playwrights, and practitioners will continue to write the history of the dramatic revival together.

This critical awareness of theatre as a collaborative art is sustained throughout the volume and is welcome, since there are critics who still treat theatre as a branch of literature and (as Reynolds reminds us) largely ignore what happens beyond the page. Roche, however, firmly identifies the dramatic revival as a public as well as a critical and theatrical endeavour, noting that, 'From the beginning the Irish Dramatic Movement was a newsworthy phenomenon.' He skilfully weaves knowledge of the plays and performances alongside relevant details about historical context, the playwright's background, and audience reception of the works.

Roche acknowledges his focus on the output of the Abbey. But the movement to re-establish the pre-eminence of Irish drama for the nation is noted not only as the result of Yeats' enthusiasm for that theatre, but also because of the collaboration between the playwrights, such as Synge and Lady Gregory, its actors, such as Sara Allgood and Frank Fay, and its directors, such as Frank's brother, Willie Fay. The volume provides close critical readings of the plays of Yeats, J. M. Synge, Lady Gregory, Sean O'Casey, and Denis Johnston. Roche also references Bernard Shaw, who provides an angle on the revival from the point of view of the exile.

Roche's research and historical detail is meticulous; he takes care to acknowledge the debate about O'Casey's working- or lower-middle-class background, and Protestant antecedents for example, despite his overt republicanism in the early plays.

Roche's discussion is lively and engaging and there is a constant tone of enthusiasm for the subject. His conclusions link the historical tradition to developments in contemporary Irish theatre and show how the revival continues to be expressed

on the contemporary Irish stage. This volume should be on the shelves of everyone interested in Irish drama and literature.

MICHELLE C. PAULL

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*Katalin Trencsényi*

**Dramaturgy in the Making:**

**a User's Guide for Theatre Practitioners**

London: Bloomsbury, 2015. 326 p. £19.99.

ISBN: 978-1-408-15567-7.

Trencsényi's book is a new contribution to the growing list of publications discussing dramaturgy and the dramaturg. It proclaims its intended audience in its title, though it is likely to be useful to students, too. Whether or not it is a 'user's guide' is a moot point, but it is an introduction to the work of the dramaturg and the history of this role. Its real strength lies in its range of case studies, and the attention to the detail of specific production processes.

Trencsényi, who is herself a dramaturg, has carried out richly informative interviews with a wide range of dramaturgs from across Europe and North America, who are engaged with institutions, writer development, and production dramaturgy in various contexts, including dance. The detailed descriptions of the dance processes in the concluding section are among the most remarkable and revealing, but all are well represented.

Trencsényi divides case studies into stages of the work process, in order to draw out similarities across them. In some ways this is successful and useful in allowing comparison. However, the differences between them could be further explored. For example the case studies in the section on 'New Drama Development' comprise widely divergent approaches, from the slow and supportive approach of *Nightswimming* in Toronto to the more controversial use of actors in a strongly pedagogical approach to writer development at the Finborough Theatre, London. In the conclusion these distinctions are not maintained, but could have provided for thoughtful discussion and debate.

Trencsényi's wish to advocate for the dramaturg can sometimes, as in this instance, appear uncritical. Historical sections, including the introduction of the production dramaturg and the dance dramaturg, sometimes lack sufficient detail and evidence. The attempt to sketch a history of 'dance poetics' is a useful prompt to consider historical precedents and is a reminder of its vastness, but Trencsényi is herself aware that it cannot be done in fourteen pages. However, as intended, the book is likely to be useful for practitioners as it does give a real sense of the role and it does build on previous work through the detail, range, and comparison of case studies. There is much of

interest in the tracing of complex and diverse processes, and the overall focus on relationship, support and challenge proves eventually persuasive.

CATHY TURNER

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David Ian Rabey

**The Theatre and Films of Jez Butterworth**

London: Bloomsbury, 2015. 225 p. £19.99.

ISBN: 978-1-408-18360-1.

Identifying suitable and, moreover, substantial scholarly sources for students of contemporary drama can be challenging as, naturally, the artwork that manifests itself in our 'now' must await confirmation of its significance before it can expect its due legacy of academic critique. In publishing this, the first book solely dedicated to the analysis and appreciation of Jez Butterworth's writings for theatre and film, Rabey provides a vital resource for a new generation of drama students and their mentors, as well as for twenty-first-century theatre practitioners and audiences, whose attraction to Butterworth's works is reflected in the latter's commercial success and critical acclaim.

As he places Butterworth's plays in their cultural and socio-political contexts (evaluating their role in the evolution of the Royal Court Theatre's tradition of staging 'state of the nation' dramas, for instance), Rabey highlights what he sees as his distinctive forms of interrogating those values (both national and personal) which must always be placed under scrutiny if theatre (we might just as readily substitute 'politics') is, indeed, to maintain its vitality and ensure its future relevance.

Rabey paints a vivid picture of what he sees as Butterworth's progression from tragicomedy to tragedy, in a body of work that supercharges the vernacular with a mythical sense of the poetic, as it explores that communion between the sacred and the profane that occurs in sacrificial rituals. Butterworth's scapegoated 'hardmen', Rabey explains, occupy urban (*Mojo*), suburban (*Parlour Song*), and rural (*Jerusalem*, *The Night Heron*) edge-lands; liminal spaces where they create themselves in response to unpredictable circumstances and stimuli which speak of exterior forces that, paradoxically, render them impotent. Butterworth's dialogues with (among others) Pinter and Beckett are discussed in detail, as are his means of implementing and depicting moments of 'irrevocable change' that would render his plays somehow more hopeful than those of his predecessors.

Rabey's compelling study of Butterworth's *oeuvre* benefits from his own practical, directorial engagement with *The River*, and by supplementing his own monograph with essays by James D. Balestrieri, Mary Karen Dahl, and Elisabeth Angel-Perez (which include phenomenological and de-

constructive analyses), he opens the door through which further philosophical enquiries into the work of one of this century's most dominant and enigmatic theatrical figures may emerge, and does a great service to current theatre scholarship.

SUSAN HENNESSY

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Rebecca D'Monté

**British Theatre and Performance 1900–1950**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015.

352 p. £16.99.

ISBN: 978-1-408-16565-2.

British theatre in the twentieth century tends to be addressed as two halves, hinging on *Look Back in Anger* in 1956. In this book Rebecca D'Monté critically re-evaluates this misleading division by revealing that the 'radical and forward-thinking' was seeping through and feeding the 'conservative, commercial, and class-ridden' bedrock of theatre throughout the first half of the century. She grapples with the impact of the two wars and proposes a detailed analysis of how British theatre responded to the traumatic events.

The volume opens with the Edwardian period and promptly dispels the notion that nostalgia defined the age. D'Monté furthers existing scholarship by discussing the social context, censorship, class, and gender issues, and, most successfully, popular genres. The second chapter provides invaluable insights into how theatre practitioners and institutions during the First World War functioned to boost morale, adapted to governmental war policies, resisted war conditions to survive, and engineered social change. In her fascinating examination of 'Theatres and the Services', D'Monté disputes received ideas about the troops' theatre expectations.

The inter-war chapter shows an industry that had to fight the competition of new media and 'an abundance of riches' available 'away from the larger, more established venues', and dramatists and audiences who needed to come to terms with the traumas of war. Hence experiments into a new theatrical language, oscillating between poetic drama, championed by the newly formed Group Theatre, and political drama, such as the work of Unity Theatre. Her last chapter closes with the image of theatre adapting to the precariousness and class-levelling effects of the Second World War and starting to rethink its place in 'the relationship between the state and the theatre, and between London and the rest of the country', a space bearing the seeds of the National Theatre, Centre 42, and the abolition of censorship.

Three contributions complete the volume with specific areas of expertise. In 'Producing the Scene', Claire Cochrane explains how the role of 'director' has evolved since the slow disappearance of the