NTQ Book Reviews

edited by Rachel Clements

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Zachary Dunbar and Stephe Harrop
Greek Tragedy and the Contemporary Actor
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 237 p. £59.99.
ISBN: 978-331-995470-7.

The term 'classical acting' within drama school training today references the techniques needed to perform texts from Shakespeare to Chekhov. The authors, formerly colleagues at RCSSD in London, correct the anomaly by examining the skills needed to play Greek tragedies. Dunbar is a music-theatre specialist now at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, while Harrop is a storytelling specialist at Liverpool Hope University, and the richness of their book derives from the way two very different perspectives merge into a single voice.

The authors' core argument is that the received teachings of Stanislavsky, still the implicit if not explicit foundation of most conservatoire training, align with those of Aristotle, a deeply misleading guide to the realities of ancient performance. The result is that student actors commonly approach Greek texts with assumptions about the primacy of text and character which leave them floundering. The authors incorporate some challenging arguments, which do not underplay complexities and contradictions in the Stanislavskian legacy. Having established their theoretical foundations, the authors offer us four hands-on chapters on sound, myth, space, and chorus – rejecting the more obvious categories of voice, narrative, mise-en-scène, and characterization.

In each chapter, the authors begin by evoking their own lived experience of watching a successful contemporary production, and follow up with theoretical reflections grounded in historical information about ancient performance and in modern performance theory, moving finally into a series of practical exercises for the classroom. The main omission, which derives from the determination to steer the student away from text-based scholarship, is any discussion of how the translator mediates the performer's experience.

Greek Tragedy and the Contemporary Actor has an original format which ties theory to practice in an engaging fashion, and it is to be hoped that a paperback version will soon make it affordable for the student user. The book presupposes a student reader who is in some measure a theatre-maker rather than the obedient servant of a director, and is concerned with creating a performance event rather than the interpretation of a canonical text. It is this capacity to create an event which keeps pushing Greek tragedy back into the repertoire. The book sits diametrically at odds with Simon Goldhill's *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today* (2007), which presupposes a very different reader, the imaginative classics student concerned with what the play means. The moral of this important book is that performances do not 'mean', they *are*.

DAVID WILES

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Anna Harpin
Madness, Art, and Society: Beyond Illness
Abingdon: Routledge, 2018. 226 p. £30.99.
ISBN: 978-1-138-78428-4.

'We, in the global north, are living in pharmacological times', declares Anna Harpin in her groundbreaking new study. Mapping the prevalence of standardized methods of treatment for anything considered as mental illness or madness, Harpin's study explores the rise of biological psychiatry and the problematic impact of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) established in 1980 and its subsequent legacy.

The book offers new ways of conceiving 'madness' and its treatments through engagement with artistic practices. Harpin advocates passionately and in great detail for the role artistic pracices can play in this regard due to their functions and scope as dimensional, relational, with capacity to change, and to exist as incomplete, and finally as a feeling encounter that chronicles human experience.

This book is also a call for tenderness, 'to be tender and to tend to one another in more radically open and uncertain manners'. With the use of pharmaceuticals consistently on the rise, such tenderness is urgently required, not least due to the failure of current treatments and philosophies of care. As Harpin notes, 'neither the drugs nor the well-being industries are making us "better". . . . It seems increasingly plain that a neoliberal model of mental health care serves to proliferate the very distress it purports to treat. Moreover, it does so in manners that render the patient not the treatment the source of failure.'

Divided into two key sections, *Madness, Art, and Society* firstly considers 'Psychiatrists, Institutions, Treatments', followed by 'Realities, Bodies, Moods'. This approach allows for a convergence

of historical, institutional, political, and policy-led strategies and concepts with insights and opportunities stimulated through artistic practice. In this way, Harpin puts forth her argument that 'many experiences that might be termed "mad" might also usefully be understood as protest against, or resistance to, the norms, values, and roles we are expected to adhere to and adopt'. Through this analysis, she concludes that our current treatment practices are not only failing but making us sicker.

By centralizing art as the optic through which we review and reconsider 'madness' and its treatments, fresh ground emerges for a conceptual and experiential discourse regarding how mental health is conceived of and responded to. Harpin includes a personal experience at the opening of this book, offering her own pain as a lens through which to frame these insights. In so doing she puts a personal voice to experiences often portrayed as frightening, alien, isolating, and happening to 'other' people. Her book marks a moment of intellectual, artistic, and tender intervention into the everyday yet extraordinary experience of health and art in the private and public spheres.

MIRIAM HAUGHTON

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Derek Miller
Copyright and the Value of Performance, 1770–1911
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 283 p. £75.00.
ISBN: 978-1-108-42588-9.

Through a meticulous investigation of legal court cases, Miller's book illuminates how British and American copyright law in the nineteenth century defined live music and theatre as a 'performance commodity'. Fungible with material commodities in a capitalist economy, the performance-commodity is an 'abstract legal entity' that seeks to isolate the economic value within a performance, regardless of its aesthetic, social, or political worth. By providing a detailed account of developments in copyright law and performance rights litigation, Miller's book bolsters existing arguments against theatre's economic exceptionalism made by theorists such as Michael Shane Boyle, Tracy C. Davis, Nicholas Ridout, and Giulia Palladini.

The first two chapters explore the early period of performance rights litigation. Chapter One brings together emerging discourse relating to performance rights in the late eighteenth century, while Chapter Two narrates how judges of copyright cases in the early nineteenth century struggled to define the ontology of drama and music, in order to delimit exactly what it was that performance rights litigation sought to protect. Miller's third chapter discusses how courts dealt with phenomena seen as peripheral to the performance commodity – such as performers' bodies or audiences' affective responses – by attempting to account for whether such factors impacted on its economic value. The fourth chapter moves on to examine how a fully commodified form of theatre operated in the late nineteenth century, whose structure had been shaped by previous litigation. A particularly convincing example is given in this chapter of 'copyright performances': ad hoc stagings of plays used to legally secure an author's copyright before a show's public premiere, solely aimed at performing 'the commodification of performance itself'.

Miller's work usefully historicizes core assumptions that undergird current scholarship in theatre and performance studies, demonstrating how notions often taken for granted – which include drama being defined not just by text but by 'embodied action' – were crystallized in consequence of nineteenth-century performance rights court cases.

There are some brief moments in the book where the theoretical analysis feels a little underdeveloped, such as in Chapter Three when Miller fleetingly turns to 1980s radical feminist legal theory to bolster his discussion of the commodification of female performers' bodies. Overall, however, Miller's book will prove crucial reading for students and scholars of theatre history, performance theory, and musicology, as well as those in legal studies examining the intersection of law and culture.

ELEANOR MASSIE

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Andrew Filmer and Juliet Rufford, ed.
Performing Architectures: Projects, Practices, Pedagogies
London: Bloomsbury, 2018. 256 p. £67.50.
ISBN: 978-1-474-24798-6.

This edited volume is based on the proposal that performance and architecture are 'bound up in action together'. A lively collection of accessible and engaging essays from artists, theorists, and teachers, it examines the 'creative intersection' of both disciplines, mainly from the perspective of theatre and performance studies.

Architect Bernard Tschumi's concept of 'event-space', influential in several chapters, rejects the idea of architecture as immutable and focuses instead on the interactions between spaces, their contexts, and their usage that generate 'an endless array of uncertainties' in practice and in meaning. In this way, we can think of theatre architecture (or indeed any architectures) not as a space *for* performance but as a space *of* performance; or, as Dorita Hannah puts it, 'an orchestrated set of sys-