

works, and more lateral connections made with her peers in the 1980s – that whole wave of playwrights who happened also to be female. Her big, fearless, metaphorical explorations of gender and postcolonial concerns were part of a movement, and her place in that context could perhaps have been assessed further.

Nonetheless this is a work of painstaking scholarship, providing a detailed appraisal of an important writer and figure in British theatre. The particular merits of Bush's book lie not only in the homage and serious consideration paid to Wertebaker's plays, but also in its capturing of what it is to be a playwright – the courage, persistence, and commitment to the art form shown by Wertebaker through all the many shades of success and frustration inevitably encountered in a forty-year career in the theatre.

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Aine Philips, ed.

Performance Art in Ireland: a History

London: Live Art Development Agency; Bristol: Intellect, 2015. 336 p, £25.00.
ISBN: 978-1-78320-428-1.

Performance Art in Ireland offers the first extensive collection of histories of live performance art in an Irish context, focusing on work produced since the 1970s. Although the artists under discussion foreground the engagement of small communities within specific localities, many draw on transnational creative exchange and deal with globally significant issues – for example Mary Duffy and Alanna O'Kelly who, in Limerick and Belfast respectively, have used art to challenge nuclear arms.

Editor Aine Philips' immensely readable introduction stakes a claim for live performance art as 'activist by its very nature' and 'deeply socially engaged', to which the ensuing content attests. Philips' introduction includes a special profile of Alastair MacLennan and Nigel Rolfe, artists who, during the mid-1970s, moved from different parts of the UK to live in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland respectively. A timeline of performance art in Ireland follows, then a comprehensive collection of colour images from the period in question, featuring striking moments in the work of artists including Rolfe, Amanda Coogan, Dominic Thorpe, Pauline Cummins, and Louise Walsh.

Two essays concerning socially engaged practice in Northern Ireland follow: André Stitt (covering his own work, that of others including MacLennan, and such cross-border, cross-disciplinary initiatives as Belfast's Neighbourhood Open Workshop) and Karine Talec (focusing on the performance art organization Bbeyond). Next, well-known artist Coogan repositions herself as 'an

archaeologist' to excavate performance art's development in Dublin from 1970 to 1990, significantly highlighting the seminal role of the city's Project Arts Centre and such artists as Rolf and Brian O'Doherty.

The collection then veers towards a concentration on sound art with Megs Morley's interview with Danny McCarthy on his practice as a sound artist working in Cork, El Putnam's reflections on her experience in Boston in 2012 of work by sound art collective Strange Attractor (which was also formed in Cork with McCarthy as one of its core members), and a timeline of sound art in Ireland from 1980 to 2014.

Although the book to some extent establishes MacLennan and Rolfe as the 'fathers' of Irish performance art, Philips associates the proliferation of the genre since the 1970s with a flourishing of international feminist ideas. Indeed, the most cogently argued essays in the book concern art as feminist activism. Kate Antosik-Parsons' tightly-woven essay explores how the 'feminist interventions' of O'Kelly, Cummins, and Duffy 'grappled with the difficulties of representing the female body while subverting dominant patriarchal norms'. Helena Walsh, drawing on her background in PaR, documents and analyses LABOUR (2012), which deals with cultural histories concerning the institutional gendering of labour. Walsh's work adds an important new dimension to existing scholarship on how performance might interrogate 'the containment of female sexuality that entered public discourse during the 1990s'.

Philips rightly foregrounds the importance of her work as a reference book for performance arts training and 'a stimulus for future projects and the evolution of Live Art in Ireland and elsewhere'. Yet, with its timely exploration of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of arts practice, informed by intersecting political interests and influences, this volume also makes a major contribution to Irish studies and cultural studies more broadly.

SIOBHÁN O'GORMAN

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Anthony Roche

The Irish Dramatic Revival 1899–1939

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015.
272 p. £16.99.
ISBN: 978-1-408-17528-6.

Anthony Roche's volume is a welcome addition to the canon of the Irish revival. The use of 'dramatic' in the title acknowledges the specific focus on theatre as distinct from the more familiar 'literary' angle, and the volume provides a probing and insightful reflection on the distinct nature of the dramatic revival.

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