

discuss cultural examples from the UK or the USA. The texts that lie outside these geographic areas are particularly important contributions to the field of cultural disability studies. The essay by Dikmen Bezmez and Ergin Bulut, examining medical television programmes in Turkey, gives an insight on how neoliberalism and religious discourse affects disability representation and discourse in Turkey.

Eduardo Ledesma's essay on blindness in film not only highlights the work of Brazilian disabled filmmaker, João Júlio Antunes, but also demonstrates the limits of analyzing pop culture stereotypes and how analyzing the strategies and aesthetics disabled artists develop in their work can be a more generative way forward.

When it comes to the analysis of UK or US mainstream culture, some of the research in the collection finds new ways to expand existing discourse. An example is Katie Ellis's work on disability in television crime drama, which demonstrates convincingly how important it is to address how disabled audiences feel about representations of disability and why disabled audiences seek out certain forms of culture, and to acknowledge that both of these issues are deeply intertwined with considerations about access. Indeed, access to and power over representations of disability are themes that run as a common thread through the volume.

The variety of cultural contexts, methodologies and forms of culture that are analyzed, make this a useful contribution to the field, though the different terminologies and expressions of *Disability Arts and Culture* sometimes feel jarring, when terminologies are used that can be deemed problematic (such as 'wheelchair-bound'), or when definitions of disability within chapters are at odds with each other.

The final contribution in the volume by Petra Kuppers, about the Salamander project, contains in itself fragments of writing by various voices and thus beautifully echoes the different perspectives present in the volume, as well as the different perspectives that the category of disability must contain.

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Grzegorz Niziołek, trans. Ursula Phillips

The Polish Theatre of the Holocaust

London and New York: Methuen Drama, 2019.

306 p. £75

ISBN: 978-1-350039-67-4.

Writing about this subject was never going to be an easy task, especially given the contemporary political climate in Poland. Grzegorz Niziołek's book does not make reading about it particularly

easy either; there are long stretches of dense theory that, at times, begin to frustrate the reader. Coupled with highly engaging discussions of plays and important considerations of Polish social and cultural attitudes towards the Holocaust, this is a challenging read.

The emphasis is on 'social and artistic conditions that have given rise to particular affects'; Niziołek examines a variety of perspectives, from directors and writers to reviewers and spectators. He interrogates a range of concepts in both historical and theatrical terms; for example, passive witnesses casting themselves as 'powerless spectators,' unable to prevent the interaction between the performers of Jewish victim and Nazi perpetrator – and the role that this view has played in post-war Polish culture.

He explores the Polish cultural extremities of 'acts of sympathy' for another's suffering and 'the experience of the Holocaust from . . . the position of the victims'. Niziołek's discussion of Jerzy Grotowski's 1964 production of *Studium o Hamlecie* (*Hamlet Study*) interestingly examines how depicting Hamlet as a Jew allowed Grotowski to strike 'at the heart of anti-Judaic prejudices' in the midst of a socio-political 'minefield', but takes some theoretical untangling.

The final two chapters are the most stimulating. Niziołek's analysis of Andrzej Wajda's 1977 production of *Conversations with an Executioner* offers accounts by reviewers, a detailed description of the production, and an outline of political challenges (namely, state censorship). In the last, he offers a provocative discussion of two plays: Słobodzianek's *Our Class*, in the context of 'working through' and catharsis, Polish collective memory of the Jedwabne massacre, Victor Turner's model of 'social drama', and Polish anti-Semitism and participation in the Holocaust; and Krzysztof Warlikowski's *(A)pollonia*, in the context of 'the institution of the Righteous [Among The Nations] and the way it has been abused in Poland for propagandist purposes', and 'the disarray in the practice of making moral judgements about the past.'

At times, assertions are made without explanation: Niziołek laments the 'marginalization of theatre in research on memory of the Holocaust [sic]', yet does not refer extensively to international scholarship on Holocaust theatre by scholars such as Robert Skloot, Lisa Peschel, Rochelle Saidel, Gene A. Plunka, and so on. (To do so would also provide greater contrast in terms of the perceived lack of Polish scholarship.) He frequently refers to 'empathy', but uses limited sources for definition and does not specify in what context(s) he is using the term. The book has been translated from Polish to

English; some of the historical events referred to needed to be explained for those outside Poland (for example, 'the political Thaw of 1956').

Overall, the book provides some resonating questions for consideration, though it is more suited for postgraduates and academic specialists with some pre-existing knowledge of the subject.

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James Reynolds

Robert Lepage/Ex Machina: Revolutions in Theatrical Space

London: Methuen Drama, 2019. 240 p. £75.
ISBN 978-1-4742-7609-2.

'I have never been to China'; this is the opening line of Robert Lepage's *The Dragon's Trilogy*, which I first saw in Toronto in 1986. James Reynolds's volume *Robert Lepage/Ex Machina: Revolutions in Theatrical Space* brings to mind the pleasure of the theatrical journey this talented director has taken theatre audiences on over the past three decades.

Reynolds has not seen *The Dragon's Trilogy*, although he discusses it in theoretical terms, through the words of other critics, like me, who were there. Reynolds is not Canadian or Quebecois, and as a result, retells history from Lepage's perspective in the first two parts of this volume, continuously using the royal 'we' and 'us' to generalize his perspective as if presenting the story as it should be understood. This study is meticulous about recounting in detail every step of Lepage's journey and tries to create order, structure and a method out of what is, by the author's own admission, this director's rather eclectic career trajectory.

The resulting Lepage method is formed from four aspects of his approach, which are traced through three stages of development. Concrete narrative, contradiction, *patenteux* (a particularly Quebecois approach to experimentation), and a political sensibility are the defining characteristics of the work, along with a rehearsal schedule that spaces three-week workshops six to twelve months apart. The three parts of the study, *Foundation and Stepping Stones* (1994–9), *Choosing all Directions* (2000–8) and *Starting Points* (2008–18) illustrate the almost impossible task of shaping Lepage's career into a narrative which demonstrates purpose and direction.

Despite the impossible task Reynolds sets himself, this study is the most thorough and considered overview of the work of this director I have ever read. The serious consideration of Lepage's architectural way of creating a story, both in the rehearsal room and on stage, is usefully articulated through the idea of a concrete

narrative. The close examination of the working practices and collaborative relationships of Lepage and his company, *Ex Machina*, is extremely revealing, and produces some compelling conclusions. This volume comes into its own in the final part when the detailed description of what the author saw in the rehearsal room is revealed. 'Perhaps, an argument can be a story,' Reynolds writes; if it can, this one tells a very good tale.

CHRISTIE CARSON

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Maggie B. Gale and Kate Dorney, eds.

Stage Women, 1900–50: Female Theatre Workers and Professional Practice

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019.
312 p. £80.
ISBN: 978-1-5261-0070-2.

The latest volume in the 'Women, Theatre and Performance' series fills a gap in the performance history of the first half of the twentieth century by examining a broad range of women's working practices. Diverging from the more typical academic focus on the non-commercial stage, the book offers a revealing examination of women's experience within commercial and popular theatre, radio, and television.

The first part explores the diverse areas in which female theatre workers were active beyond the industry, in many cases drawing upon skills they had developed on stage. Maggie B. Gale's chapter demonstrates how consideration of the autobiographical writing of theatrical celebrities can advance revisionist histories of the profession. Kate Dorney's examination of theatre collector, campaigner, and war worker Gabrielle Enthoven reveals the productive intersection between professional and amateur spheres. This is also evident in Lucy Sutherland's study of the 'creative autonomy' Winifred Dolan exercised as a teacher and producer of school drama after retirement from the West End. The social and political engagement of theatre workers is explored through Catherine Hindson's discussion of the not inconsiderable concealed labour actresses were expected to undertake through charity work, and Naomi Paxton's chapter on the campaigning and war effort activities of the Actresses' Franchise League. Less desirable public engagement is evidenced by Viv Gardner in legal cases brought by actresses seeking to defend interests and reputations.

Part Two presents studies of an eclectic mix of women noted for their popular performances. Together they highlight the expertise and resilience displayed in taking on the challenges of new technologies and working conditions.