

efficacious. Insofar as it also establishes a field of study—the performance of camouflage—the book will be of interest to scholars of space, performance, and gender generally.

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Disabled Theater. Edited by Sandra Umathum and Benjamin Wihstutz. Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015; pp. 248, 18 illustrations. \$30 paper.

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Reviewed by Allison P. Hobgood, *Willamette University*

In *Disabled Theater* editors Sandra Umathum and Benjamin Wihstutz have compiled a series of scholarly essays, interviews, and vignettes that explore Jérôme Bel's 2012 production of the same name, "a production that involves eleven actors with cognitive disabilities from Theater HORA in Zurich, one of the foremost inclusive theater companies in Europe" (7). The performance was received in widely contrasting ways across the world by spectators and theatre critics alike, and this controversy evidenced "the collision of completely different conceptions of theater, art, and aesthetics" (7). Umathum and Wihstutz aim to cultivate in their volume an array of responses to the production that are anything but "indifferent" (7). They open their short Prologue with two main goals: to offer a forum for heterogeneous responses from audience members to performers themselves to the question "What do you think about this piece?"; and to make space for discussion of the "relationship between aesthetic, social, and political aspects of the performing arts" (8). Though its sole focus is clearly *Disabled Theater*, the volume is comparative at times, positioning this production next to other performances Bel has directed, as well as against Christoph Schlingensiefel's 2004 film *Freakstars 3000* and Diane Arbus's photography, for instance.

Arguments in the collection range from understanding *Disabled Theater* as political "because it systematically destroys any kind of secure ground from which to differentiate between an appropriate or inappropriate representation of disabled people" (30) to "tak[ing] seriously the production's interest in disability as a potent aesthetic tool" (63). Essays also attend to the way the work resists identity politics (147) and to how "discourses on *Disabled Theater* seem to end up rotating around the still-disturbing spectacle of alterity with which the actors and their *handicaps* interpellate the audiences' ableism simply by *being present*" (144). Authors also broach the possibility of an aesthetic that arises precisely from how "the performance was treading the fine line between presenting and exposing its performers, thus highlighting the intricate problem of (re)presenting disability" (179).

Although a few of the essays are incisive, one of the most useful, unique aspects of the collection is its inclusion of interviews with both Bel and all of the actors in the production. Although some of the interview questions are too leading or even vaguely infantilizing, particularly in the case of the actors, one does get a sense of the lived history of the production before and after its more ephemeral night-to-night moments on the stage. Furthermore, Bel opens his interview with

a discussion of the global politics and variable transnational sensibilities about disability as they were visible in the stark contrast between, for example, American and German audiences' responses to the production. Bel describes audiences in New York and Minneapolis as "problematic" (163) and surmises that US spectators and reviewers were "embarrassed" and "much more tense . . . [S]ome accused me of abusing the performers," he explains (163). Spectators in Berlin, by contrast, were part of a "certain dynamic" where, according to Bel, "[o]nce they have started applauding, they get into it, they don't dare to stop because they want to respect every single one of the performers" (163–4).

Although the essays provide a good overview of the material logistics and affective potencies of the production, readers invested in the juncture of theatre and disability studies will be disappointed if hoping for more rigorous theoretical studies of the performance across disability methodologies. Critical disability studies, an obvious tool for opening up these essays fully, is woefully underused in the volume (Scott Wallin's and Kati Kroß's essays are two especially notable exceptions). In other words, the volume falls prey in myriad moments to the very thing it aims to query: the ideology of ability. The book's language use often is startling, as the terms "handicapped" or "mentally challenged" are used frequently without explanation and in hypermedicalizing ways. Its recurrent approaches to ability–disability are framed via an us–them dynamic (the audience *we* that is the "social agent of aesthetic community" [129] is too often assumed to be able-bodied and able-minded). Furthermore, the "axiom of the supposed authenticity of disabled people" (187), one that Kroß astutely takes up and critiques in her essay, lurks beneath the surface of many of the chapters and generally undermines the performative power of disabled actors. I also found it surprising that, even as the book claims to be deeply interested in aesthetics, critical disability work on the topic—especially vibrant in US disability studies from scholars like Michael Davidson (*Concerto for the Left Hand*), Tobin Siebers (*Disability Aesthetics*), or Ellen Samuels (*Fantasies of Identification*)—was rarely mentioned, even in footnotes.

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Applied Theatre: Development. By Tim Prentki. Applied Theatre. London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015; pp. x + 291, 8 illustrations. \$104 cloth, \$29.95 paper, \$24.99 e-book.

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Reviewed by Emily Jane Warheit, *University of Maryland, College Park*

Tim Prentki's *Applied Theatre: Development* is part of the Applied Theatre series edited by Sheila Preston and Michael Balfour. This book combines a useful introduction to the field of applied theatre, written by Prentki (Part I), followed by an edited volume of case studies (Part II). Prentki, a professor at the University of Winchester, UK, is the former head of the Theatre and Media as Development MA program there. The contributors are scholars and practitioners of applied theatre from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, South America, China, the Netherlands,