

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

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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.

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Rebecca D'Monté

**British Theatre and Performance 1900–1950**

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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