

the male gaze which Dolan laments and which remains an urgent feminist issue.

However, her feminist reprisal also entails renewed strategies as she looks to extend the feminist gaze across cultural forms – from the popular to the avant-garde, from film and television to theatre and performance. This is with a view to encouraging more ‘people [to] write feminist criticism to popularize it in the cultural imagination’. With this in mind, her final chapter offers a hands-on or ‘how-to’ guide for writing feminist criticism with useful prompts: thinking about the context in which a particular work is produced, casting a critical, gender-inflected eye over those who review it, and thinking about strategies to make the work of women artists more visible.

Exemplifying her action-based call for feminist criticism is the main body of the study that assembles material from the blog – reviews of shows from 2006 to 2012 – into four categories: ‘Advocacy’, ‘Activism’, ‘Argument’, and ‘Artistry’. Acknowledging the several ways in which these might have been organized, Dolan also provides an appendix that directs readers to how the book might be approached and navigated via alternative groupings – by themes, genres, or authorship. The value of the reviews for the would-be feminist critic has arguably less to do with the information they contain about particular works than the way in which Dolan’s approach opens up experientially formed reflections as she attends to how a show has moved her to think. My hope is that Dolan’s readers will be similarly moved or inspired by her study to develop their own feminist perspectives and critical voices.

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doi:10.1017/S0266464X14000761

Jen Harvie

Fair Play: Art, Performance, and Neoliberalism

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 256 p.

£18.99.

ISBN: 978-1-137-02727-6.

The rise of art and performance practices which engage their audiences socially by asking them to participate has become increasingly important to contemporary performance scholarship, and Jen Harvie offers a stimulating analysis of the ‘social turn’ in contemporary art and performance. Harvie’s addition to this oeuvre is both timely and provocative. She examines this ‘social turn’ through a neoliberal lens, paying particular attention to the quality of the participation that this kind of work enables audiences to experience. She suggests that in some respects this trend in contemporary art and performance empowers individuals, offering important social benefits that can extend some of the principles of democracy.

More persuasive, though, is her thesis that in many respects this kind of work is complicit with neoliberal capitalism. Here, her argument really comes to life as she articulates processes which reproduce neoliberal ideals, prioritizing individual wealth over a social democratic consensus.

Her theoretical framework is multidisciplinary, touching on cultural materialism, political theory, and studies in housing and philanthropy among others. This encourages the reader to view the practice, events, and policies as a series of intricate and networked relationships that produce the social and political potentials of contemporary participatory art and performance. The first chapter closely analyzes participation, considering this especially in relation to labour. Here, in one of the strongest sections of the book, Harvie takes the reader through terms such as immersive theatre, one-to-one performance, and delegated art, delineating and defining each term in really useful ways.

The following three chapters explore how qualities of participation are affected by the broader contexts of British cultural policy; New Labour’s emphasis on entrepreneurialism; contemporary spatial practices, including how they are affected by current shifts in urban and housing practices; and finally arts funding, especially in response to the withdrawal of more and more state support.

Harvie’s focal point is London, a place which she constructs as a nexus of extreme contrasts and where the tensions between welfare state socialism and neoliberal capitalism are especially acute. She paints a vivid picture of London as a place where the ‘social turn’ was especially strong in art and performance from the mid-1990s to 2012, including the work of several significant artists and performance makers such as Rachael Whitehead, Michael Landy, Lone Twin, and Punchdrunk. Her book is a vital read for all scholars of contemporary performance, particularly those concerned with socially engaged art and performance.

CLAIRE BOWLER

doi:10.1017/S0266464X14000773

David Wiles and Christine Dymkowski, ed.

The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

336 p. £18.99.

ISBN: 978-0-521-14983-9.

This is a timely volume in a well-established series. The editors have grouped materials into a useful ‘why, when, where, what, and how’ structure, so the book aims to achieve a great deal in terms of coverage. There is a periodic, geographic, and formalistic division of materials, from Stefan Hulfeld on ‘Modernist Theatre’ to Erika Fischer Lichte on ‘Classical Theatre’. The area coverage

includes Finland and Japan and there are chapters on 'The Audience' and 'Circus' in terms of the volume's embracing of different theatre themes and traditions. The breadth of coverage is both a strength and weakness of the volume, however, and at times the pitch of the chapters is uneven in terms of the depth of materials covered and the approach taken to the balance between summary description and critical analysis.

The strongest section as a whole is the 'How' section which ends the volume. Here, scholars such as Thomas Postlewait, Barbara Hodgdon, Gilli Bush-Bailey, and Jacky Bratton with Grant Tyler Peterson write eloquently and with a genuine critical curiosity about key issues in theatre historiography. All of them map the theoretical challenges of theatre history – both its formation and articulations – through using concrete examples which will be both entertaining – Postlewait on Marlowe mythologies for example – at the same time as being rigorous and very current. Bratton and Tyler Peterson's chapter on the internet, its 'authority claims', and the identification of 'expertise' is really useful and will engage newer scholars in a way that the more traditional 'theatre history' work will find less easy to achieve.

Whilst some of the sections are perhaps less successful than this last, there are gems to be had here too. Ros Merkin on Liverpool, localism, and the popular is a pertinent intervention in its plea for a move away from the monopoly of capital city cultures and the sometimes far too generic framework of 'the global'. Similarly Josette Féral's 'The Art of Acting' provides both a compact and thought-provoking trans-historical summary. Overall the mixing of traditional approaches to theatre history with more current and theoretically framed methodologies related to historiographic practices makes this a volume that is valuable for students and scholars alike.

MAGGIE B. GALE

doi:10.1017/S0266464X14000785

Leslie Elaine Frost

Dreaming America: Popular Front Ideals and Aesthetics in Children's Plays of the Federal Theatre Project

Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press,

2013. 206 p. £8.99.

ISBN: 978-0-8142-1213-4.

The achievements of the short-lived but remarkable Federal Theatre Project (FTP) in the USA in the 1930s have been rightly celebrated, but the work of its children's theatre units have received relatively little attention. Leslie Elaine Frost's new study seeks to remedy this lack. This she does with considerable verve and some meticulous scholarship. Her overriding goal is to locate the

FTP, and the children's plays in particular, within the wider social, political, and cultural context of New Deal America. The Popular Front ideals, assumptions, and contradictions, which pervaded so much of the pioneering and ambitious cultural activity of the period, provide recurring points of reference.

Far from being an add-on, theatre for children was central to the work of the FTP, helping to cement the project's overriding twin goals of providing theatre for the widest possible range of audiences and of securing government-funded employment for out-of work, depression-hit artists and backstage and administrative staff, including those in circus and children's entertainment as well as in regular main-stage theatre.

Frost's main theoretical underpinnings are laid out in her first chapter, in which she examines the growing interest in child psychology in the 1930s alongside the partially articulated ideals of the broad, leftist, Popular Front movement which foregrounded 'citizenship' and collective action for the common good. Childhood in this context was, Frost argues, increasingly seen, and variously represented, as a universal state, transcending ethnic and class boundaries, and 'emotionally priceless'. The ideals in practice, and in the world of state-funded entertainment especially, proved rather more problematic, as Frost, for the most part persuasively, goes on to demonstrate.

Her subsequent chapters focus on four key strands of the theatre work for children, beginning with the highly controversial case of *The Revolt of the Beavers*, by all accounts a well produced, high-octane fantasy about two children caught up in a crisis in Beaver Land: an uprising against the callous and oppressive king of the beavers. Despite playing to full houses, it was taken off after just seventeen performances due to mounting criticism of its supposed underlying Marxist polemic.

Further chapters examine attempts to reach and engage Black American audiences, explored through various versions of *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, including a radical Chicago adaptation by Charlotte Chorpenning which sought to celebrate African heritage in contrast to more stereotypical and implicitly racist interpretations elsewhere; home-front patriotism and anti-fascist sentiments against a backdrop of mounting international tensions in Europe, notably in Chorpenning's one-act *Letter to Santa Claus*; and the parent-child relationship in the FTP's most popular children's play, Yasha Frank's *Pinocchio*, compared interestingly to the Disney version that followed a few years later (1940).

This is an illuminating and perceptive study, marred slightly by some laborious prose and by some inconsistency with which the author attends to production qualities and to audience response. But the spotlight thrown upon this important,