

force and flow, and mind. Illustrated by many of his own detailed, expressive drawings, a context is offered for analyzing and understanding posture, alignment, movement patterns, and habits. Each area is examined in detail, and accompanied by excellent practical exercises to heighten awareness and understanding.

Illustrated by Da Vinci's drawings, the second half of the book offers an anatomical basis for understanding expression and the body. Theoretical background is excellently supported throughout by awareness exercises to illustrate anatomical and physical information. Like many movement practitioners, Schwiebert has developed this body of work through selecting elements from a variety of existing movement and somatic practices; the selected principles are sound, the underpinning is profound.

The book makes fascinating and valuable reading for the movement teacher as well as for the student of movement, performance, or dance searching for a deeper underpinning to their practice. It is particularly relevant for the post-graduate student wanting a practical approach to movement practice as research. As the author acknowledges, there is only so much physical understanding you can gain from reading a book. However he also recognizes that the reader will actually experience the physical sensation while understanding a concept, premise, or principle. The author's calm and passionate voice is very present in the book; he is in the room as we follow the exercises, he anticipates our response and asks perfectly timed questions, taking us through complex principles of movement theory translated into accessible language and exercises. Reading this book is a movement session in itself!

NIAMH DOWLING

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Michael Y. Bennett, ed.

Refiguring Oscar Wilde's *Salome*

Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2011. 306 p.

£53.40.

ISBN: 978-90-420-3432-7.

This, somewhat surprisingly, is the first collection of essays solely on Wilde's 'anomalous' non-comedy, *Salome*. The volume sets out to explore the play 'in depth' and to 'fully consider *Salome* as a part or an anomaly of Wilde's oeuvre'. The essays are paired (with one triple grouping) thematically in 'common scholarly conversations surrounding *Salome* and Wilde's work, as a whole', and this – fulfilling the aim of the 'Rodopi Dialogue' series – enables an organized, but polyvocal reading of the book itself, and more importantly, re-engagement with the play.

The fifteen essays, from established and emergent scholars, range over a cornucopia of subjects:

language, gender identity, Wilde's Irish identity, necrophilia and enchantment, tragedy, and Wilde as a symbolist, modernist, or post-modernist. It engages with the play in its many, often intertextual and intermedial manifestations – drama, dance, literature, opera, and film. Far from producing confusion, this scholarly eclecticism produces some fruitful and exciting juxtapositions. Some are internal to the essays ('*Salome* and Judith Butler', '*Salome* and Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*', 'Death and Tragedy in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and *Salome*', Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* and Covent Garden's 2008 production of the Strauss opera, and perhaps more predictably, but no less effectively, '*Salome* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*'). Others are external: essays on '*Salome* and Romanticism' sit side by side with essays on '*Salome* and the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s', and a detailed analysis of Headlong's 'raw and alarming' production of the play in 2010.

In the introduction, Michael Y. Bennett defends his choice of illustration for the cover of the infamous photograph of the opera singer Alice Guszalewicz as *Salome* – thought for a long time to be of Wilde himself posing in the role – because it 'in a sense . . . best sums up the controversies and issues of the past fifty years surrounding Wilde's *Salome*' – ambiguity, liminality, opera/play, hetero/homosexual and perverse desire, the gaze – which Bennett wishes to revisit and develop through the book as a whole.

Perhaps best read in conjunction with the more linear 1996 Cambridge 'Plays in Production' stage history of *Salome* by John Tydeman and Stephen Price (who contributes the essay to this volume on *Salome* and *Sunset Boulevard*), this book opens up the play as, and for, performance. The range of essays in the volume serves both to locate the play in its original intellectual, aesthetic and theatrical context, and to suggest the complex possibilities of twentieth and twenty-first century readings and performances of the text without imposing an erroneously singular or homogenous overview on this elusive play.

VIV GARDNER

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Oliver Double

Britain Had Talent: a History of Variety Theatre

Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012. 288 p. £17.99.

ISBN: 978-0-230-28460-9.

This lively and eclectic historical account of variety theatre hums with enthusiasm and replicates the playfulness of the studied form. Oliver Double bounds precisely across the interlocking narratives that nest beneath this theatrical tradition and, like a diligently planned variety bill, keeps his wide-ranging and ambitious discussion

to time. This is a lucid and well-researched book that is brimming with charming anecdotes (such as Des O'Connor's *faux* faint), curious detail (such as the barring clauses), and engaging passages of analysis (such as the choreography of glances between Morecambe and Wise).

The book charts the rise, fall, and legacy of variety with skill. Double attempts to counter the 'misty-eyed nostalgia' for Victorian music hall, that regularly casts variety as the poor cousin, with an argument for variety's historical and cultural significance. The work in this way offers a valuable contribution to this underdeveloped area of study. The short chapters offer a rich survey that collectively depicts the people, places, practices, and performances in fine detail. The emphasis of the study falls on the singers and comedians, but this appears again to replicate the form. There is a wealth of material here, but this never overwhelms the clarity or cohesiveness of the book.

There are, however, moments that would have benefited from further elucidation. Issues regarding authenticity, censorship, and liveness, for example, were not as keenly explored as they might have been. Alongside the breadth of material there are several key refrains that echo through the text. I was particularly struck by the implication that for both comics and other artists the content of the act was less paramount than one might imagine; rather, one hears how comics rarely wrote their own gags, while the rope-spinners' technical skill was but one small aspect of their success.

Double explores this question of precisely what constitutes the 'performance' in variety through key notions such as personality and participation. The book concludes with a suggestive, if perhaps somewhat fleeting, account of variety's legacy.

Though there is much to recommend this book, two key aspects are marginalized. The relationship between variety and theatre is frequently implied but not fully addressed. This would not have been a conspicuous concern were it not for both the striking potential of this conversation and the occasional glances in theatre's direction that the book does make. The nods to Stanislavsky expose more than they reveal. Similarly, the question of politics is largely overlooked in ways that, for this reader, undermined the critical bite of the study. Multiple questions with respect to class, nation, gender, and disability (amongst others) are luminous in the book yet are not interrogated. However, while there was definite room to wrestle with the politics of the form more fully, this remains an excellent resource in the field. It is bursting at the seams with fascinating research, and this wealth of variety content is executed with assured delivery.

ANNA HARPIN

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Kimberly Jannarone

Artaud and His Doubles

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

272 p. £26.95.

ISBN: 978-0-472-11736-9.

In *Artaud and His Doubles*, Kimberly Jannarone presents an arresting and clear-sighted revisionist reconstruction of Antonin Artaud's prospective stagecraft, as well as the rhetoric and world view that conditioned and infused it. That reconstruction has had to work against a profoundly fetishistic academic field. Indeed, Artaud's name has developed a quasi-religious gravity such that even a thinker so uncompromisingly critical as Jean Baudrillard (2005) could warn against succumbing to 'the delusion of assuming that talking about Artaud is possible'.

It is in refreshing opposition to this received belief in Artaud's profound exceptionalism that Jannarone, *contra* Baudrillard, dares not only to talk about Artaud, but also to undertake the task of grounding his theatrical work firmly in the requisite historical contexts.

The monograph's thesis is strikingly bold: Artaud's proposed 'Theatre of Cruelty' was, in terms of its historical and phenomenological sources, formal programme, and broader social intent, deeply interwoven with the moment of fascism in interwar European aesthetic and political culture. The book situates Artaud's theatre, so often characterized as a liberating revolt or tragic promulgation of an impossible vitality, at the nexus between two seismic developments that defined the history of modern theatre: the emergence of newly passive bourgeois theatre audiences and the parallel rise of the figure of the theatre director with increasingly absolute power over the theatrical event.

Jannarone shows how Artaud fused these developments into a spectacle in which an exalted and omnipotent director would captivate and compel an arrayed mass of physically elated but intellectually docile bodies.

While the sheer extremity of that spectacle was largely unparalleled in the discourse of modernist theatre, it was matched by the surrounding politics. Indeed, a diffuse but very palpable historical unity emerges between the 'organized anarchy' of Artaud's theatre and a range of popular fascist theatres in Italy, Germany, and elsewhere, if not the simultaneous discipline and euphoria of the Hitlerite rally itself. By framing Artaud's writings and theatrical productions in the tumultuous context of interwar fascism, Jannarone ultimately overturns the longstanding and habitually un-critical leftist investment in the political radicalism of Artaud's work and world view at large.

Undeniably, Artaud's proposals for a radically reinvented culture entail an impending transi-