

both sympathetic and desirable: key facets of celebrity. Yet, as Engel shows through a close reading of the *Memoirs*, Robinson was ultimately unable to reconcile this self-portrait of idealized femininity with her visual presentation and public reputation.

It is the subject of Engel's third case study, Mary Wells, however who is by far the most fascinating of the women examined. Unlike Siddons and Robinson, Wells departed entirely from conventions of eighteenth-century heroines, challenging rather than embracing idealized gender models. Her performance of madness, Engel argues, functioned as parody while her mimicry disrupted the fantasy of authenticity which was at the heart of successful celebrity self-fashioning. Drawing both on Wells's own writing and on that of her lovers, Engel presents a vivid picture of this 'monstrous *diva*' and makes a compelling argument for the recovery of this fascinating character, whose resistance to categorization, she argues, has until now resulted in scholarly neglect.

Overall this is a thought-provoking study which skilfully and unusually draws equally on both art history and literary analyses. Providing a nuanced picture of the possibilities and problems involved in using both the printed word and the artist's canvas to fashion celebrity in the late eighteenth century, Engel identifies the emergence of self-fashioning strategies which, as she argues in her epilogue on Fanny Kemble, only a generation later would have become as central to public women's profiles as they continue to be today.

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doi:10.1017/S0266464X12000371

Sarah Burton

How to Put on a Community Play

London: Aurora Metro Press, 2011. 187 p. £12.99.
ISBN: 978-1-906582-15-9.

Burton's book claims to be a 'comprehensive guide' rather than a foolproof manual and, although she tells the reader she has a PhD in theatre, her voice here is definitely that of the practitioner rather than the academic. That said, there is a rather scholarly tone to parts of the first chapter as she sketches the possible history of the community play, tracing its routes primarily from the medieval Christian tradition of the Mystery plays.

The definitions of a community play from the Dorchester and Woking Community Play Associations are helpful in locating this specific form of theatre which Burton asserts may well be ripe for a revival. The opening chapter also includes a brief but useful consideration of the outside-in or inside-out model of community plays where the impulse to initiate a community play project can come either from outside elements or can build from a few interested individuals inside the com-

munity and work outwards. There follows a brief discussion on the claims made for community cohesion, or what Burton calls 'social harmony', but this is not considered in any detail and the comparison with drama work in prisons is not really very helpful.

The chapters that follow cover getting funding, putting a core team together, writing the script, casting and rehearsing, the production, administration, and publicity. The book ends with a list of useful contacts as well as a short bibliography, although none of the quotations in the first chapter are fully referenced, so following up any of the references would present a challenge.

All of the examples and the numerous black and white images in the book are taken from Burton's own experience of staging the Haddenham community play, a Christian nativity play initiated in 2000 in Burton's own village and performed there every two years since. There are several great stories about experiences and events that happen when a big group of people gets together to undertake a theatre project like this, all of which are used to make a sensible or helpful point about the best way to approach each aspect of the project.

This book would be really useful to anyone who did want to undertake such a project, and Burton's advice would certainly help to avoid reinventing the community play wheel. For theatre scholars it provides a fascinating insider's view into what seems to have become a local tradition and performance ritual, and, valuable as Burton's own warm anecdotes are, the long narrative sections where a wide variety of participants reflect on the experience of being involved are equally insightful.

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doi:10.1017/S0266464X12000383

Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye

Performing Presence: Between the Live and the Simulated

Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2011. 260 p. £55.00.
ISBN: 978-0-7190-8004-3.

In *Performing Presence*, a book that resulted from a major AHRC-funded research project, Giannachi and Kaye address a complex matter of current concern and a wide philosophical concept: the notion of presence in performance, and the differences, overlaps, and mutations between live, mediated, and simulated presence. Few concepts are more challenging to tackle than the notion of presence, and few are more persistently urgent in the advent of digital technologies as our lives and artistic practices become augmented with digital layers of data, reshaped by technological artefacts, and extended into the domain of the virtual.