

The power of the book is to be found in the creative and contemporary insights captured in the versatility of these case studies and the attention to detail paid to the dynamic relations between topics in both the social and pure sciences as well as the humanities, ranging from the postdramatic performance aspects of war to life-science laboratory games in a 'theatre lab' – 'a hub of research at the meeting point of science and performing arts', bringing scientists and performance artists into a performative space of synchronized togetherness in 'performing science'.

In its topicality and diversity of authorial approach and content the book liberates the reader from the confines of ontological and epistemological understandings that Western cultural centrisms impose upon us. Sharon Aronson-Lehavi, for example, in her essay on 'Re: location', shows how the spatiality concept of performance helps to desensitize the binary opposition of art *v.* reality, shifting 'the location of performance from the fiction realm to the real happening'. In asking the aesthetically inviting question of 'What is the location of a performance?', she draws the reader into a discussion of liminality, that threshold-crossing space of social interplay so pivotal to performance because of its 'susceptibility to change and its sensitivity to human encounters and interactions'. In this respect, aesthetics is at the heart of Schechner's proposed 'Third World of Performance' built around a positive promise of the capacity of performance to reshape the world.

DEBORAH NEWTON

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Jackie Snow

### **Movement Training for Actors**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2012.

224 p. with DVD. £22.05.

ISBN: 978-1-408-12857-8.

Movement exercises are a fundamental part of actor training. Actors get more in touch with their emotions through participating in movement exercises and learning to be in their body, they learn to use the body in developing a character, and they can use the movement training in plays or films that utilize dance. In Helen Edmundson's adaptation of *Anna Karenina*, for example, staged at the Arcola in 2011, dance is not used *qua* dance, but instead as a mimic for the bustle of a Moscow street, to demarcate social and class lines, and to be a metaphor for the blossoming of a doomed love affair in a snowy winter.

Choreographer, movement director, and teacher Jackie Snow points out many of the advantages of movement training for actors in her superbly organized book. She takes the reader through not just the reasoning behind movement training, but also a wide range of movement exercises that will

be very useful both for budding actors, and for the seasoned teacher at a conservatoire or theatre studies course. Snow brings together techniques and principles from movement teachers Litz Pisk and Trish Arnold, voice teacher Kristin Linklater, Rudolph Laban, the mask work of Jacques Lecoq, Feldenkrais and Alexander techniques, period dance, and more.

She says that the main reasons to employ this training are to loosen and strengthen the body, express imagination, and explore physicality. The method takes a release-based approach, with its swings, breath work, ability to fall into the floor and release held tension, and the encouragement to take risks and break with ingrained postural and movement habits. It is an excellent resource for practitioners looking for a store of movement exercises.

As a critical dance studies researcher, though, I can't help but squirm when writers use terms like 'universal movement' or 'natural body'. This way of speaking about the training suggests that we all come from a universal body-knowledge, and that release-technique can strip away years of habit and take us back to our 'roots' – that there is a 'natural' body lurking under all the posturing, so to speak. This approach ignores that movement and bodily principles such as yoga, tai-chi, pilates, and release technique have history and politics embedded in them which can limit their accessibility for culturally driven actor training and create a hegemonic 'natural' body that tends to exclude other bodies.

AMITA NIJHAWAN

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Peter Billingham

### **Edward Bond: A Critical Study**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 182 p.

£55.00.

ISBN: 978-0-230-36739-5.

In this new study Peter Billingham charts Edward Bond's career from the young, socially positive playwright of the 1960s, to the iconoclastic elder statesman of the present century. Billingham notes three phases in Bond's writing career to date. In the introduction, we are shown the young Bond, notorious for the perceived violence of his plays, railing against the establishment and displaying the iniquities of society as he saw it. In this section, Billingham looks at formative experiences in the life of the young playwright and how his career developed.

Next is a close examination of the period from 1970 to 1981, grouping together plays that sought to reimagine characters from literary history from *Lear* to *Restoration*. Finally, the author looks at Bond's later work from *Crime of the Twenty-First Century* onwards. The comparison between these

two politically charged periods in the writer's life is fascinating. In the earlier work Bond is certainly mistrustful of society but also hopeful for the future (see the 'optimistic' conclusions to *Saved* and *Lear*). In the later period, however, his earlier positivity dissipated and was replaced by a certain inevitability that the democratic society is doomed to fail.

Billingham's passion for Bond's work is clear. The analysis of the plays is thoughtful and the author gives a good sense of context throughout. Interviews with practitioners who have worked with Bond (along with the occasional word from the man himself) also give great insights into the working practices of this least conventional playwright. In fact, the book as a whole helps to highlight just how innovative Bond has been during the latter half of the past century and how he continues to defy convention in the early years of the new.

It would be easy after fifty years of activity to categorize this study as a retrospective of Bond's work. This would be incorrect as, in the author's words, 'Bond's output as a dramatist demonstrates an ongoing evolution of ideological discourse and post-structural innovation.' Bond as a playwright has never stood still, never becoming 'comfortable' in any one temporal, thematic, or structural 'place', and is still 'evolving' his craft. In essence, this study is a timely reminder that Bond's early work was prescient and his later work continues to be relevant in the present day,

WILL NELSON

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*Penny Farfan and Lesley Ferris, ed.*

**Contemporary Women Playwrights:  
into the Twenty-First Century**

Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 348 p.

£19.99.

ISBN: 978-1-137-27078-8.

Focusing on women playwrights from 1990 onwards, this text offers a wide-ranging look at a number of noted and lesser-known writers. Despite the editors' apologies as to the 'incomplete' nature of the book, it does offer more of an international perspective than previous texts covering women playwrights, and includes chapters on Egyptian, South African, Latin American, and Oceanic writers. The text is divided into three sections ('Histories', 'Conflicts', and 'Genres'); however, these delineations seem rather arbitrary since the majority of chapters, as one would expect in such a broad topic, overlap and could as easily be placed in one section as another.

Bookended by two of the leading scholars in feminist theatre, Elaine Aston and Elin Diamond, the book is very much rooted in Aston's assertion that much of women's contemporary writing is

'feeling the loss of feminism', in that while few plays are specifically about feminism, the subject matter and form of presentation reflect the dissatisfaction that many women have with the so-called post-feminist era.

Aston's excellent chapter, and the book in general, were published too early to provide effective commentary on the rapid rise of third-generation feminism. Theatre has, however, also been slow to respond to the rise of a younger generation of feminists, so the text accurately reflects the present concerns of women playwrights. Diamond's nostalgic chapter is a wonderful tribute to three artists who led the way for feminist theatre-makers – Deb Margolin, Robbie McCauley, and Peggy Shaw – and reminds us of the physical potency that is commonplace in work by women.

Other highlights include Nehad Selaiha and Sarah Enany's examination of Egyptian women attempting to work in changing political climates; Soyica Diggs Colbert's look at the African American cultural context of Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop*; and Diana Looser's documentation of indigenous women playwrights in Oceania, many of whom have received little critical attention. There is a noticeable absence throughout the book of commentary on the process the women undertake in creating their work; more information on methodology would be useful, especially given the often difficult circumstances women face in getting work produced.

Of obvious interest to feminist scholars, this text should also be read by those generally interested in international work; it offers a number of possibilities of plays to stage for theatre-makers wishing to look beyond the standard fare.

KAREN MORASH

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*Anthony Roche*

**Synge and the Making of Modern Irish Drama**

Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2013. 288 p. £37.22.

ISBN: 978-1-904505-64-8.

This fine collection of stimulating essays in homage to John Millington Synge includes three specially written for this volume. Roche evaluates both Synge's status as a founding figure of modern Irish drama and an enduring dramaturgical resource for recent and, he speculates, forthcoming work. A former director of the annual Synge Summer School, and an intellectually curious scholar of contemporary Irish theatre, Roche is well suited to his subject and this task.

The study is presented in consecutive sections, structured around two critical purposes: to show 'how theatrically alive and fertile *The Playboy of the Western World* remains', and to argue that Synge's dramas are 'seminal . . . to the century of Irish drama which followed' his death in 1909.