

The greatest strength of *Learning to Kneel* is the interdisciplinarity of both its subject and its methodology. Preston explores historical, modernist, and contemporary Noh theatre, Pound's poetry, Yeats's and Beckett's plays, Itō's choreography, Ozu Yasujir's cinema, and Britten and Plomer's musical scores. Also included are reflections on university teaching, dance and performance training, liberal ideas of agency and submission, and gender and queer performativity. The text itself makes bold and successful use of intermedial resources: as well as photographs throughout the book, Preston provides a link to online clips demonstrating the dances and performances that she discusses, ranging from Itō's *Pizzicati* to her own performances of Noh choreography.

Preston is a skilled storyteller as well as a scholar. *Learning to Kneel* includes accounts of her own journeys to Japan to be trained in Noh performance, and the resultant impact on her university teaching. Recollections of the physical pain and submission involved in Noh lead into accounts of her own teaching practice and exploration of unconscious training in submission and subversion in Western universities with her own graduate students.

However, she is as self-reflexive and self-conscious in her storytelling as in her scholarship, 'wary' of the 'comforting story' we might choose to construct when dealing with cross-cultural exchange. *Learning to Kneel* offers a nuanced perspective of Japanese-European-American encounters that reaches beyond easy accusations of orientalism and appropriation, while remaining alert to their danger. Preston emphasizes the value of creative failure and 'misrecognition' in attempts at cultural exchange, from Pound's error-laden but enormously generative engagement with Noh theatre to her own self-conscious encounter with Noh performance as a white Western woman. Scholars of Noh and Japanese theatre will be grateful for this important text, but so too will be those interested in European and American modernism, theatre and performance theory, pedagogy, and theories of agency, submission, and subversion.

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Alex Mermikides and Gianna Bouchard, ed.

Performance and the Medical Body

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In Helen Pynor's and Peta Clancy's (literally) immersive performance piece, *The Body is a Big Place*, a group of transplant donors, recipients, and family members meet underwater in a swimming

pool. The piece actualizes relationships between donors, recipients, and wider social networks in a way that is relatively neglected or even ignored within biomedical research and clinical practice. It is one of many recent performance pieces discussed in this edited collection, and exemplifies a mode of curious yet critical exploration of the medicalized human body that emerges in diverse forms within the book's chapters. Pynor and Clancy's performance piece also takes a stance that is shared by several other authors and artists represented in the collection by making bodies perform in ways that echo but also subvert biomedical modes of performance.

Performance and the Medical Body is the latest in Methuen's 'Performance and Science: Interdisciplinary Dialogues' series and constitutes a dialogue between disciplines that is both critical and imaginative. A key rationale for the volume is the editors' observation that there has been a recent surge of interest in medicine within theatre and performance practice.

In the introduction, Mermikides and Bouchard provide a useful mapping of practices centred on but not restricted to the UK, articulating how the medical body has become a significant site of exploration across a range of forms of theatre and performance. Pynor's chapter sits alongside contributions by Gabriella Giannachi, Alex Mermikides, Suzy Willson, Gianna Bouchard, Martin O'Brien, Solomon Lennox and Fiona Pettit, Brian Lobel, Petra Kupperts, and Emma Brodzinski that together offer a rich documentation and critical vocabulary for understanding this range of practice.

This context within contemporary practice is historicized by Kirsten Shepherd-Barr's chapter which looks at theatre from the nineteenth century that shared some of the ambivalences about the medical gaze to the more recent work discussed elsewhere. A chapter by the surgeon and medical academic Roger Kneebone gives a sense of how the themes and practices discussed in the book might contribute to medical practice and research, notably within his fields of surgical and broader medical education.

The central idea of the medical body – a body that is 'acted upon' – is drawn from the work of Jennifer Parker-Starbuck. This key concept is displayed from a number of angles in Parker-Starbuck's chapter, which uses the method and metaphor of the cabinet of curiosities. This collection – itself a cabinet of curiosity and critique – provides a significant contribution to this emerging research field within theatre and performance studies and medical humanities. Its various chapters are engaging and should prove accessible to a range of readers including practitioners, students, and scholars from different disciplines.

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