

less-studied periods in Irish history. The author's gaze upon her own family is refreshingly objective, notably in the epilogue, in which she discusses the fact that her own grandfather's view of Irish history was just as partial, in its own way, as the nationalist view taught in Irish schools when the Irish state was young.

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SUBSCRIPTION THEATER: DEMOCRACY AND DRAMA IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1880–1939. By Matthew Franks. Pp 258. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2020. US\$89.95.

We are currently seeing a new wave and era of cultural/entertainment subscription. Subscriptions globally are increasing as we join in our chosen (and sometimes multiple) streaming service — from Netflix to Spotify, yet in Ireland there is a dismal rate of compliance with the television licence payment for R.T.É., the Irish national broadcaster. We, it seems, gladly pay and subscribe for some content while choosing or expecting it for free from others, even if one is providing a public service. Often what we choose to pay for depends on who or what influences us. 'Subscribe here' is the familiar button on the screens of our daily online interactions and regarding how we consume culture. We are all subscribers now.

But what cultural forms utilised subscription within its financial model in the past? Subscription and various iterations of 'Friends' schemes for theatre and performing arts are common in contemporary theatre, with a rise in the independent company model, most recently seen since the 1970s and 1980s in Ireland. Previously, and historically, subscription was a means for theatres and theatre managers to engage audiences and build networks of support. But did the building of such subscriber lists and supporters interfere with programming and artistic direction? Did subscription allow for an independent model of production? A singular answer to these questions may not be possible for each but the system of subscription is one that has considerable presence (and as is argued) a weighted presence in the politics of theatre in Britain and Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century and in the decades that followed.

In *Subscription theater: democracy and drama in Britain and Ireland 1880–1939*, Matthew Franks explores the intersections between subscription of the theatre in Britain and Ireland in the period that straddles the late nineteenth century to the the mid twentieth century. The time period in question illuminates some of the context for the book's wider consideration. The former date of 1880 lends itself to political and theatrical significance (terms not exclusive of each other throughout the book), as, for instance, 1880 is dominated by events of the Irish Parliamentary Party election success in April, and only weeks earlier in February, Dublin's Theatre Royal burnt down. The later date of 1939 alludes to international political events, such as the beginning of the Second World War, or in Irish theatrical terms at least, the death of W. B. Yeats.

The book outlines an original and innovative survey of the role of subscription, lists and the cultural as well as social politics of their role in the theatre, sometimes functioning as both exclusive and/or inclusive clubs. In utilising such club models, subscription theatres were able to avoid the often-censorious pre-production vetting and potential enforced closures of Britain's Lord Chamberlain's Office, which was in force until the 1960s. In mid twentieth-century Ireland, the subscription/club model became associated with the 'pocket theatre' movement, synonymous with the likes of the French 'Le Théâtre de Poche' model of bohemian Paris, and reflective of a new, innovative, experimental and provocative theatre, at venues like the Pike Theatre on Dublin's Herbert Lane, in the early 1950s. Franks's book begins with the examination of private subscription theatres in London at the end of the nineteenth century, including the Independent Theatre Society (1891–7) and the Stage Society (1899–1939). Further attention is then given to public subsidised theatres, mostly regional repertory companies across the U.K.

As Franks outlines the context to British and Irish subscription theatre in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the lists for a particular theatre was an important

signifier of the class of its subscribers and also its audience. At a time of political and social agitation, those subscribers were also influencing what was being programmed on the Irish and British stages. Franks offers a strong defence of subscription records as neglected but vital historiographic sources given the volume of data they hold. Along with the often-trivialised playbill, the lists of subscribers reveal the financial investors of a theatre and its plays; it also acts as an archive of the liveness of theatre-going, where the collective of the audience created ‘virtual stages’ of their own, by virtue of the placement of their name on the published list, where their seat was in the auditorium or by lobbying for favour from managers in the press columns (p. 6). Within the archival theory of theatre-going and of its history, from performance and form, to repertoire and reception, as long studied by historians and performance scholars, from Peggy Phelan, Diana Taylor, Chris Morash and Rebecca Schneider, among many others, members of theatrical subscription lists are a ghostly club, largely unseen within the ephemeral performance archive itself, but yet influential over so many other facets of the theatre’s wider history — both on stage and off. It is the impact of this neglected group, the subscribers and funders of theatre, whom Franks skilfully uncovers in this study. A central premise of the book is, as Frank asks, to consider how ‘subscription forces us to ask how the public inside the theatre relates to the public outside it?’ (p. 8). The theatrical collectives studied in great detail reflect the social act of theatre-going and also of the contribution to the creative process — how subscribers reimaged dialogue between theatre management and the wider public.

A great strength of the book, and to Frank’s considerable merit, is the extent of research into and analysis of archival material and performance ephemera, from playbills, to flyers, magazines, and subscription lists and correspondence themselves. Such items are often the first point of contact and communication between the theatre and its prospective audience and warrant deeper attention as they do here. Franks outlines early in the book the quantitative practice of a study that must also be cognisant of the ‘ephemeral repertoire’ (p. 44), as well as the physical and textual record. The post-archival turn and increasing insistence on digitised records or online databases can skew data results, if the printed matter is not included. While a small section in the book, it provokes interesting methodological questions. A chapter focusing on public subscription models in Glasgow and Liverpool in particular reminds us that ‘provincial newspapers were key to public subscriptions’ (p. 49) and that such models reflect a more contemporary and familiar corporate model of ‘corporate shareholders’, where ‘Citizen Theaters could exceed as much as anticipate, the representative authority of democratically elected city councils’ (p. 74).

The book’s final chapter presents a study of Edward Gordon Craig’s revered theatre and art magazine, *The Mask* (1908–29). Franks reminds us that within his study which argues ‘subscription aspired to give playgoers representative control of the theatre’ (p. 145), there still was the ongoing challenge of control, power and influence. Craig’s editorial string-pulling of the magazine, as if it were another of the marionettes that he designed for the stage, jostled with the collective views of his (albeit less than astounding) subscriber numbers (which numbered in the high hundreds at most), who as Franks notes ‘steered *The Mask* toward democracy despite Craig’s undemocratic predilections’ (p. 146). The complexities of editorial policy, subscriber influence and reader appetite make for a fascinating journey through little theatre magazines across Europe of the early to mid twentieth century — a topic in itself deserving of a wider study — and which here, added to with the playful exploration of ‘Craig’s Lists’ (p. 156), and how subscriptions were communicated to the public within the magazine (again supported by illustrations from the magazine itself). Is it therefore all a performance? Perhaps so, and Craig was as skilled in the media of communication as much as in the theatre. The chapter might pivot somewhat from the main thrust of the book’s flow and feels slightly elbowed in, but it is still a highly interesting section.

While the book aims primarily at Britain and Ireland, there are enough links and segues into the global comparison and experience of subscription theatre models internationally to interest readers and historians of theatre beyond the book’s main core objective. The author should be commended for an accessible writing style, refreshing in presenting a rigorously researched and detailed work, rich in data, archival, and ephemeral material that is a welcome

and enlightening study into the power, influence, and many complexities afforded to and by the subscribers to Ireland's and Britain's theatres.

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UNE RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE IRLANDAISE EN FRANCE: MAUD GONNE ET L'INTERNATIONALE NATIONALISTE, 1887–1914. By Pierre Ranger and Anne Magny. Pp 171. Oxford: Peter Lang. 2021. €52.86.

Before becoming a tortuous inspiration and one of the most famous muses in the canon of poetry written in English, and shortly before becoming a very visible and enterprising agitator for Ireland, Maud Gonne had become a *boulangiste* in France. In 1887, aged twenty, she had become the lover of Lucien Millevoye, father to her first two children. He was a conservative, married Catholic journalist, but also the henchman and speechwriter of the radical right-wing, militarist and revanchist General Boulanger. As Millevoye was becoming embroiled in populist agitating and conspiring against the French state, they nurtured their shared, feverish Anglophobia, and he cast her as the Joan of Arc of Ireland. With his encouragement and expertise in propagandist communications, Gonne began to publish articles in French on the misery and oppression which British egotism was inflicting on Ireland.

These disquieting facts partially shaping her entrée into agitating for Ireland are well known, though they have not been satisfactorily contextualised from a historical perspective, at least not in English-language publications. In 1922, Gonne's name was even juxtaposed with Millevoye's and his right-wing paper, *La Patrie*, in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Proteus), though without comment. A review of a recent short biography in these pages (no. 167, May 2021) had duly highlighted that the book, while departing from previously reductionist approaches, had not adequately analysed the early rhetoric on Ireland Gonne projected to French audiences. Nor had it afforded the reader an understanding of the international circles and milieux she operated in.

The Millevoye period had already been addressed by Adrian Frazier (*The adulterous muse*) who references the contribution made by the two authors of the book here under consideration: Anne Magny's examination from a cultural perspective of Gonne's career in France and self-representation, and Pierre Ranger's critical assessment of her contemporary press contributions. As most of their publications are in French, their examination of this early phase of Gonne's activism has not been sufficiently drawn on. They begin with a historiographical overview of the paradoxes which define Gonne and which have challenged biographers, considering gendered and reductionist approaches to this female rebel, the crushing weight of her relationship with Yeats, and the gender barriers she broke. While stating that Frazier's book has gone farther (in English) than any other to date in discussing the early problematic years, they also direct readers to Margaret Ward's vigorous response to it, well beyond its provocative title. His book will not be reviewed here, but it is worth signalling that it approaches Gonne via her relationships, its language is unsympathetic, almost mocking at times, and the narrative is burdened by an overabundance of anecdotal detail. Her agency in agitating for Ireland is overshadowed by the doings of Millevoye and his set, and her cruel misleading of Yeats.

Magny and Ranger on the other hand approach this paradoxical subject and eccentric person with scholarly distance. Their timeline begins with meeting Millevoye in 1887 and ends with the marriage to John McBride in 1904, because these dates clearly delineate a critical period of Gonne's agitation; during this time she frequently travelled to London or Ireland, but France shaped her ideology and methods, and was the base from which unfolded her most intense years of political engagement. The book demonstrates that only by examining the political, social and cultural context of France on the cusp of the twentieth century not as