

recognize themselves in these discussions? To me, this verbosity is detrimental and dated; it recalls “postcolonial” analyses that attempt to validate the worth of othered artists through inaccessible accounts of their work. The postcoloniality of this volume—including its wielding of the contentious term “intercultural”—not only discounts a dominant local trend of fiery, urgent, culturally specific work on regional decolonization, but also takes away what it means—or at least, what it feels like—to embody Oceania. A lack of engagement in this book with contemporary Indigenous conceptions of family, gender, sexuality, and Pasifika youth identities—perhaps an effect of writing from outside our region—overlooks other exciting recent works, such as that of FAFSWAG, the queer, Indigenous, interdisciplinary arts collective based in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, Aotearoa. If transpasifika performance needs a poster child, FAFSWAG should be it.

As Looser reinforces, allyship remains important and vital to ensuring the international dissemination of our work. But there is folly in writing about us without us: If we can’t see ourselves, are we really there? In short, we are not in this waka together, and though our courses might intersect, our destinations remain distinct.

doi:10.1017/S0040557422000266

• • •

## Actor Training in Anglophone Countries: Past, Present, and Future

By Peter Zazzali. *Routledge Advances in Theatre and Performance Studies*. London: Routledge, 2022; pp. xxii + 229, 34 illustrations. \$160 cloth, \$48.95 e-book.

Dan Cullen

Department of Theatre and Film, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, USA

Peter Zazzali’s first book, *Acting in the Academy* (2016), argued that US-based B.F.A. and M.F.A. acting programs are built on a model that prepares graduates for employment as performers in a robust network of regional theatres that no longer exists, and that programs must adapt their curricula to suit prevailing economic conditions. In what Zazzali calls his “entrepreneurial approach,” it is not enough for actors to be proficient in psychophysical techniques to render a believable character onstage or onscreen. In an environment that no longer offers the traditional infrastructure for actors to find work, they are multimedia content creators equipped to make their own work. Zazzali’s latest work, *Actor Training in Anglophone Countries: Past, Present, and Future*, extends this argument to the larger English-speaking world. In the context of the continued depletion of opportunities in live theatre accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and a growing market for performances that advocate for racial justice within both artistic institutions and larger societal structures, Zazzali’s vision of the entrepreneurial actor takes on a greater sense of urgency.

The book limits its scope to actor-training programs at institutions of higher learning in the British Isles, North America, and Anglophone Oceania. Yet the

number of case studies he examines—a total of eighteen—and the multiple methodological lenses through which he views them make *Actor Training in Anglophone Countries* an impressive undertaking. Each case study is treated historiographically, through the examination of archival documents that chronicle a program's inception, financial support (or lack thereof), mission, and leadership structure, as well as the success of its alumni. These archival findings are supplemented with testimony from interviews with long-tenured instructors and former program heads. These histories reveal, time and again, the conditions that have motivated actor-training institutions to ally themselves with the neoliberal university, as well as the tensions and drawbacks inherent to that relationship. In addition, the author conducted ethnographic research into each program to give a sense of the day-to-day experience it offers: its training methods, facilities, production offerings, and student–teacher relations. With access to all this data, one might easily get lost in the minutiae of which techniques for voice, movement, script analysis, or character development are gaining or losing prominence among top-flight institutions, but Zazzali's interest and the import of the study lie elsewhere.

The three chapters comprising the body of the text (after a brief introductory chapter) group his case studies by region, but they also suggest a prevailing attitude toward the training and its outcomes in that region. The first of these considers seven institutions in the United Kingdom, along with Ireland's National Academy of Dramatic Art, as representatives of a “paternal model” (17). According to Zazzali, this model manifests a colonial mindset in which British institutions have established standards for training based on the skills they impart. Thus, “They consciously and subconsciously wield an outsized influence on how training is perceived and practiced. . . . This explains in part why prospective students from countries far and wide come to the United Kingdom—notably London—to attend drama school. The lore and marvel of London-based training conjures images of fame and sublimity for an aspirant from afar” (22–3). Zazzali evaluates each of these programs based on the degree to which it has reckoned with this legacy and its attendant bias toward the bourgeois white male student. In doing so, he credits programs for taking steps to improve the racial makeup of their student bodies while underscoring the difference between assimilating students of color into Eurocentric traditions and actually decolonizing the curriculum.

Next, the book explores five North American training programs, three in the United States and two in Canada, which to varying degrees gesture toward a “commodified model” (62). Although throughout the book Zazzali demonstrates that Anglophone actor training around the world sees its task as preparing young actors to market themselves as commodities, this commodified model refers both to the opportunities these programs offer students to present themselves in the marketplace through public-facing projects, and to how the programs themselves must be packaged as commodities for the university to buy and sell. He posits that the most forward-thinking programs are those that have pivoted to methods that produce entrepreneurial actors. Perhaps the most significant critique to be made about the text is its fundamental assumption that this entrepreneurial model, and its lean into the actor's role as a cog in the capitalist machine, is the best and only way forward for twenty-first-century actors.

Finally, Zazzali considers five actor-training programs in Australia and New Zealand under the umbrella of a “postcolonial model” (127), yet for the most part, these programs do not appear to have found their way to living up to the “post”

prefix, choosing instead to emulate the curricula and pedagogical styles of elite programs in the United Kingdom and North America. The notable exception is Zazzali's chosen exemplar of postcolonial actor training: Toi Whakaari, New Zealand's national drama school. Indeed, for Zazzali, Toi is a template for the future of actor training in the English-speaking world writ large. Rather than attempting to scatter a handful of non-Western performance techniques throughout a Eurocentric curriculum, Toi has "a *tikanga*—a learning culture—that is reliant upon Māori frameworks. While many of the school's training techniques are drawn from Western models, indigenous values shape their transmission and reception" (156). The school's commitment to decentralizing European performance techniques and canonical texts is complemented by experiences working on camera, in digital spaces, and in collaboration with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. These commitments represent the total encapsulation of the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and entrepreneurial spirit that Zazzali identifies only partially at work in his previous case studies.

*Actor Training in Anglophone Countries* provides a thorough, thoughtful exploration of institutional actor training in the English-speaking world. It is a valuable resource for anyone involved in the creation of acting curricula on any level. The depth of Zazzali's research allows him to speak authoritatively on the state of the acting profession and what teachers need to do to prepare their students to succeed within it. Moreover, Zazzali's lucid, straightforward writing style makes the information easy to digest, and his argument—that a "progressive" (39) mode of actor training must be inclusive and accessible while also expanding notions of what an actor's work entails—highly compelling.

doi:10.1017/S0040557422000308

• • •

## Rethinking Chinese Socialist Theaters of Reform: Performance Practice and Debate in the Mao Era

Edited by Xiaomei Chen, Tarryn Li-Min Chun, and Siyuan Liu. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021; pp. x + 309, 15 illustrations, 4 tables. \$80 cloth, \$64.95 e-book.

## Transforming Tradition: The Reform of Chinese Theater in the 1950s and Early 1960s

By Siyuan Liu. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021; pp. xiii + 458, 43 illustrations. \$85 cloth, \$69.95 e-book.

Glenn Odom

School of Arts, Centre for Research in Arts and Creative Exchange, University of Roehampton, London, UK

For two books with a degree of intersecting content, the volumes here are substantially different. On the one hand, we have *Transforming Tradition: The Reform of*