

from a complete revision instead of a tacked-on ending. Jortner's chapter feels like a condensation and simplification of James Brandon's much stronger essay, "Myth and Reality: A Story of *Kabuki* during American Censorship, 1945–1949," from the Spring 2006 issue of *Asian Theatre Journal*. The tenth chapter, an overly brief examination by Junko Saeki of gender construction in *Chūshingura*, adds little to the book.

Most problematic, however, is that the book does not exactly deliver what it promises. Although almost all of the scholars in the book are senior professors who are masters in their fields, none of these scholars is primarily a specialist in English Renaissance drama. They are all Asianists. Even within studies of Japanese drama, the focus is quite narrow: most of the essays on Japanese theatrical forms discuss only *kabuki*, with *nōh* and *bunraku* discussed only peripherally. English-language studies of Japanese revenge drama are certainly valuable, but in this collection, the best essays are those that discuss revenge drama across culture. This book will certainly be of use to scholars and students of revenge drama and Japanese theatre, but perhaps its greatest value is in showing that a more fully comparative monograph remains still to be written.



Highbrow/Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class.

By David Savran. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009; pp. 326. \$24.95 paper.

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Reviewed by Fonzie Geary, Culver–Stockton College

In *Highbrow/Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class*, David Savran states his purpose clearly: "My goal in this book is to demystify O'Neill" (3). Savran tackles the legend of Eugene O'Neill's ascendance to the heights of American drama in the 1920s by offering a close examination of the relationship between popular and legitimate entertainment of the era. Taking his cue from French theorist Pierre Bourdieu, Savran ponders the cultural forces at work in authorizing an author. He asks the questions of how and why O'Neill was allowed to emerge as (and remain for many) America's most important playwright. The centerpiece of Savran's analysis, however, is a factor that even he concedes has little to do with theatre on the surface: jazz. He justifies this focus by explicating how jazz represents not merely a brand of music, but a radical cultural movement. Savran integrates jazz with a critical examination of social class. Through this examination, he offers a compelling picture of why American theatre became so conducive to an insipid literary theatre, which relates directly to O'Neill's canonization.

The book covers a wide range of both theatre and jazz personalities. Savran admits to modeling the organization of *Highbrow/Lowdown* on a vaudeville show, producing a variety of acts that incorporates a huge cast with a few stars and innumerable secondary characters along the way. He purposefully avoids

chronological order because his interest lies in the “concurrence of events” (9). The book contains seven chapters as well as a prologue and an epilogue. In the prologue, Savran sets up his purpose like an expert trial lawyer making his opening statement to a jury. His goal is clear, convincing, and compelling in fewer than eleven pages. He provides the reader with a road map of how the book will proceed, summarizing each chapter with succinct efficiency.

Savran concentrates in his first chapter on an in-depth examination of the struggle to define jazz in the United States. He wrestles with the racial aspects of the music, but emphasizes that jazz is not a simple matter of black and white. Acknowledging that no firm definition of jazz exists, he stresses the musical complexities of the genre such as time, syncopation, key, and instruments. Savran contends that jazz formed from the mutual borrowing of both black and white artists. He then transitions into an examination of the parameters of popular versus legitimate entertainment and the class hostility that developed between these two artistic forms. As part of this discussion, he provides an extensive and insightful analysis of Gilbert Seldes’s *The 7 Lively Arts*, which helps him build to the conclusion of how the middle class came to support the emerging (and terribly boring) literary theatre. Recognizing that no adequate sources of statistics exist for determining what classes were attending what forms of entertainment, Savran reviews anecdotal evidence, such as newspaper accounts, that provide a flavor of what kinds of audience were attending what kinds of show. In so doing, he gives a glimpse into the importance of audience biases and artistic hierarchies for determining the category of “legitimate” art.

To consider the cultural impact of jazz, Savran takes various approaches. He devotes one chapter to an analysis of the influence of the Gershwin brothers, viewing their musical comedies in relationship to the racial origins of jazz. In another chapter, Savran concentrates on the combination of jazz and expressionistic theatre. His analysis of *The Adding Machine* and various reactions to it offer insight into the broader cultural context. He dedicates another chapter to a comparison of the careers of musicians John Alden Carpenter and George Antheil, contrasting the music of the highborn Carpenter to that of the working-class Antheil as an effective anecdotal illustration of the clash between highbrow and lowbrow culture. In the end, these various complexities serve Savran well by demonstrating how the Jazz Age was conducive to the rise of a singular American playwright.

Savran devotes his last chapter to an investigation of the crucial role critics have played in American cultural development. He argues that major critics encouraged the literary theatre by attacking jazz and other popular entertainments such as vaudeville and burlesque, all the while canonizing O’Neill’s work as representative of legitimate art. Savran paints the critics as prophets and O’Neill as their messiah. In using Judeo-Christian religious analogies, he identifies the process of O’Neill’s emergence with one of the most significant aspects of American middle-class culture. Savran highlights, in particular, O’Neill’s personal relationship with George Jean Nathan as a striking example of how celebrity critics positioned themselves as arbiters of American culture. In his brief epilogue, Savran makes the case that the culture manufactured during the Jazz Age “has proven

remarkably resilient” (265) in that theatre remains an elitist entertainment relative to most film and television. He supports his argument in part by pointing out that the effect of the established order remains evident in response to the work of playwrights such as Tracy Letts, whose play *August: Osage County* was understood by critics to have sprung from the O’Neillian tradition.

In *Highbrow/Lowdown*, David Savran has produced an intriguing piece of scholarship that stretches beyond theatre to examine broader American culture. The influence of jazz on theatre artists of the 1920s has been noted by previous scholars, among them Jonathan Chambers in his examination of John Howard Lawson in *Messiah of the New Technique* (2006). Jazz, however, was only one facet of Chambers’s analysis of the whole of Lawson’s career. Savran’s innovative approach brings jazz to the forefront of the wider American theatre experience. *Highbrow/Lowdown* represents significant original research addressing the matter of how and why Eugene O’Neill became the foremost American playwright of the twentieth century. It is an important study for scholars interested in the development of twentieth-century American theatre as well as those interested in the influence of jazz and class relations upon American popular culture.



(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance. By Josephine Machon. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; pp. 221. \$90 cloth, \$29 paper. doi:10.1017/S0040557411000597

Reviewed by Lourdes Arciniega, University of Calgary

Quantifying visceral performance in theoretical terms can be a daunting task, but Josephine Machon tackles the challenge successfully in *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance*, providing both theatre practitioners and academics with a thought-provoking analysis that lays the groundwork for future research in this emerging field of theatre studies. Machon defines visceral theatre performances as those that highlight a dialogic connection among the performing body, the playtext, and an audience whose response to the action is often unsettling and unexpected. In her quest to find a theoretical discourse to analyze visceral performance, Machon appropriates the term “(syn)aesthetics” from the Greek, meaning the merging of sensations and perceptions, to formulate an “interpretative device which describes *simultaneously* a performance style—its impulse, and processes of production—and the appreciation strategy necessary to articulate a response to such work” (4). She adds the parentheses to the word to distinguish her theatre-based theory from the neurological term it echoes.

Machon begins by defining terms and boundaries, and outlining theories that provide the foundation for the practical analysis to come, repeatedly stressing the interdisciplinary, intertextual, and even intersensual nature of visceral performance. This fused sensory experience merges the semantic with the