

striking in Menon's selection and analysis of artworks is the way in which they offer a new sensory perception of the urban by taking both the artists and the spectators through experiences that take them beyond their secure status as individuals, where the artists, rather than wilfully 'moulding' the materials they use, foreground a process of 'yielding to its sensuous vitality' (p. 37) and their 'particularity and historicity' (p. 33). Menon thereby centres the durational, layered and meditative quality of works 'as a prerequisite to a new understanding' (p. 41) through critical reflection.

While the dominant theatre historiography in India is conceptualized through the lens of regional language-based theatres, with the English theatre often seen as elite and marginal, the book convincingly shows the contemporary political charge of the English-language theatre emerging in the neoliberal city as it engages with the intersectionality of queer lives. Neoliberal subjecthood constituted through aspiration is a critical framework to be read in relation to contemporary discourses of political theatre and performance, especially that of post-dramatic theatre. The book will interest scholars from across the disciplines and areas of theatre and performance studies, visual studies, urban history and cultural studies.

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***The Second Wave: Reflections on the Pandemic through Photography, Performance and Public Culture.*** By Rustom Barucha. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2022. Pp. xviii + 250. \$24.50/£18.99/₹599 Pb.  
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Rustom Barucha's book *The Second Wave: Reflections on the Pandemic through Photography, Performance and Public Culture*, as the title suggests, makes a visceral, clinical and philosophical enquiry into the most elemental aspects of life, breath and breathlessness. Barucha reflects on shared suffering and collective memory, offering much-needed hope by highlighting moving occasions of human resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. His primary concern has to do with death, grief and mourning, (the inability to mourn), extinction and survival, and with how we experienced time, space and speed during the onslaught of the pandemic. He explores these by looking at a vast array of everyday cultural practices, multiple disciplinary practices, and artistic interventions from the Indian and Euro-American contexts.

The book is thematically divided into three chapters, each fathoming death, performance and censorship of grieving; lack of time and space to mourn; and subsequent extinction. Barucha's dramaturgical brilliance is reflected in the building of narrative, where he smoothly weaves exhaustive topics from climate justice, ecological disaster, the breakdown of public health systems, access/no access to oxygen in hospitals, approaches to mental health, local knowledge systems of healing, hierarchies in vaccine distribution, death rituals and crematoria, finally arriving at breath and breathwork, the most elemental manifestation of human existence. He does this by masterfully intertwining debates from scholars such as Deepesh Chakravarthy, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, John Berger, Judith Butler, Raymond Williams, Sunder Sarukkai and Susan Sontag, among others.

Speaking of the temporality of the virus, he states, 'It exists ... in an omnipresent state of volatility, at once palpable in its impact and invisible in its ambience' (p. xvi). His excellence as a dramaturge is reflected in his exploration of time in its multifaceted dimensions by looking at historical time, cosmic/ecological time, mythological time, fictive/narrative time and embodied time. He discusses the importance of engaging with the temporality of duration, therefore

paying attention to frozen time, cyclical time (memory that keeps haunting) and elongated time (visible in the migrant labourer's arduous walk for survival).

At a spatial level, the pandemic continues to be everywhere in our bodies, homes, streets, theatres and airports (p. xvi). Barucha, without obliterating the inherent voyeurism, ethics and legality attached to photography, analyses them as physical evidence and forces us to witness, re-encounter and re-examine the spaces/sites (both physical and digital) that emphasize government surveillance, censorship, haphazard lockdown regulations, the sheer absence of care and the negligence of the governments (particularly the Indian government) towards people (pp. 52–8). He also focuses on the curb of our basic ability to touch, reach out and move freely within a space and its impact on our mental health at the same time as nature started to breathe and heal when the world stopped.

Ruminating on the horrors of 'Endings' (extinction, death) and 'Exits' (from a theatre) in its tangible and intangible folds, Barucha finds a more hopeful take by thinking of time in its cosmic, ecological and mythological expansiveness. He thinks of endings/exits as merely time in between-space where something new is beginning (taking shape), perhaps not yet completely visible. He urges us to breathe mindfully with each other, keeping in consideration our interconnectedness with nature and the ecology, emphasizing 'care of self with a deeper regard for the world, and, more critically, a renewed respect for the planetary resources' (p. 203). He asks us, 'Will we face the next wave with our eyes wide open or shut?' (p. 203) – a question we need to ponder individually and collectively to find practices and methods of mourning, healing and surviving as resistance. Barucha's style of writing is self-reflexive, often agitating, making it experiential, and I found myself teary-eyed while reading a few sections. Even though the book deals with dense theoretical arguments as well as dark subjects, his mastery in narrative writing makes it an easy read accessible for academic and non-academic audiences.

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***Uday Shankar and His Transcultural Experimentations: Dancing Modernity.*** By Urmimala Sarkar Munsi. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022. Pp. xvi + 281. £99.99/\$117.75 Hb.

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Uday Shankar, a doyen of Indian dance and choreography whose career spanned from colonial to postcolonial times in India, is a name to reckon with in the landscape of Indian and world performance culture. However, his experimental approach has often made his legacy a subject of debate, hindering research inquiries, leaving his extensive body of work rather underdiscussed. In this context, Urmimala Sarkar Munsi's book *Uday Shankar and His Transcultural Experimentations* emerges as a significant and much-needed contribution. In this book, Munsi offers a fascinating exploration of the life and creative evolution of Uday Shankar. With meticulous research and thoughtful observation, Munsi takes readers on a transformative journey, delving into Shankar's pioneering approach to dance and the experiments that defined his illustrious career.

By immersing readers in the historical and cultural context of Shankar's era, Munsi adeptly maps his niche in dance topography. She highlights the significance of Shankar's interactions with prominent artists like Anna Pavlova and Martha Graham, offering a glimpse into the intricate web of transcultural exchanges that influenced his artistic vision. The accounts of the foreign tours of Shankar's troupe allow readers an extensive survey of the influences that shaped Shankar's innovative, eclectic and diverse approach to dance.