

works, and more lateral connections made with her peers in the 1980s – that whole wave of playwrights who happened also to be female. Her big, fearless, metaphorical explorations of gender and postcolonial concerns were part of a movement, and her place in that context could perhaps have been assessed further.

Nonetheless this is a work of painstaking scholarship, providing a detailed appraisal of an important writer and figure in British theatre. The particular merits of Bush's book lie not only in the homage and serious consideration paid to Wertebaker's plays, but also in its capturing of what it is to be a playwright – the courage, persistence, and commitment to the art form shown by Wertebaker through all the many shades of success and frustration inevitably encountered in a forty-year career in the theatre.

ELIZABETH KUTI

doi:10.1017/S0266464X15000950

*Aine Philips, ed.*

**Performance Art in Ireland: a History**

London: Live Art Development Agency; Bristol: Intellect, 2015. 336 p, £25.00.  
ISBN: 978-1-78320-428-1.

*Performance Art in Ireland* offers the first extensive collection of histories of live performance art in an Irish context, focusing on work produced since the 1970s. Although the artists under discussion foreground the engagement of small communities within specific localities, many draw on transnational creative exchange and deal with globally significant issues – for example Mary Duffy and Alanna O'Kelly who, in Limerick and Belfast respectively, have used art to challenge nuclear arms.

Editor Aine Philips' immensely readable introduction stakes a claim for live performance art as 'activist by its very nature' and 'deeply socially engaged', to which the ensuing content attests. Philips' introduction includes a special profile of Alastair MacLennan and Nigel Rolfe, artists who, during the mid-1970s, moved from different parts of the UK to live in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland respectively. A timeline of performance art in Ireland follows, then a comprehensive collection of colour images from the period in question, featuring striking moments in the work of artists including Rolfe, Amanda Coogan, Dominic Thorpe, Pauline Cummins, and Louise Walsh.

Two essays concerning socially engaged practice in Northern Ireland follow: André Stitt (covering his own work, that of others including MacLennan, and such cross-border, cross-disciplinary initiatives as Belfast's Neighbourhood Open Workshop) and Karine Talec (focusing on the performance art organization Bbeyond). Next, well-known artist Coogan repositions herself as 'an

archaeologist' to excavate performance art's development in Dublin from 1970 to 1990, significantly highlighting the seminal role of the city's Project Arts Centre and such artists as Rolf and Brian O'Doherty.

The collection then veers towards a concentration on sound art with Megs Morley's interview with Danny McCarthy on his practice as a sound artist working in Cork, El Putnam's reflections on her experience in Boston in 2012 of work by sound art collective Strange Attractor (which was also formed in Cork with McCarthy as one of its core members), and a timeline of sound art in Ireland from 1980 to 2014.

Although the book to some extent establishes MacLennan and Rolfe as the 'fathers' of Irish performance art, Philips associates the proliferation of the genre since the 1970s with a flourishing of international feminist ideas. Indeed, the most cogently argued essays in the book concern art as feminist activism. Kate Antosik-Parsons' tightly-woven essay explores how the 'feminist interventions' of O'Kelly, Cummins, and Duffy 'grappled with the difficulties of representing the female body while subverting dominant patriarchal norms'. Helena Walsh, drawing on her background in PaR, documents and analyses LABOUR (2012), which deals with cultural histories concerning the institutional gendering of labour. Walsh's work adds an important new dimension to existing scholarship on how performance might interrogate 'the containment of female sexuality that entered public discourse during the 1990s'.

Philips rightly foregrounds the importance of her work as a reference book for performance arts training and 'a stimulus for future projects and the evolution of Live Art in Ireland and elsewhere'. Yet, with its timely exploration of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of arts practice, informed by intersecting political interests and influences, this volume also makes a major contribution to Irish studies and cultural studies more broadly.

SIOBHÁN O'GORMAN

doi:10.1017/S0266464X15000962

*Anthony Roche*

**The Irish Dramatic Revival 1899–1939**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015.  
272 p. £16.99.  
ISBN: 978-1-408-17528-6.

Anthony Roche's volume is a welcome addition to the canon of the Irish revival. The use of 'dramatic' in the title acknowledges the specific focus on theatre as distinct from the more familiar 'literary' angle, and the volume provides a probing and insightful reflection on the distinct nature of the dramatic revival.