

actor-manager at the turn of the century to the initiatives of Joan Littlewood and the Oxbridge-brewed directors who emerged in the 1950s. Penny Farfan devotes her attention to 'Gender and Sexuality on the Modernist Stage' in selected plays, approaching key figures such as Edith Craig, Maud Allan, and Noël Coward 'from *across* customary boundaries of British modernism'. In 'Staging Hitler, Not Staging Hitler', Steve Nicholson's case studies articulate the difficulties facing dramatists in time of war when the Lord Chamberlain had to apply changing guidelines in exercising his policies from the rise of Nazism in 1933 to the end of the war.

The volume is meticulously documented and is an essential reference for an extensive range of courses on twentieth-century theatre and future research in theatre history. It presents a wide spectrum of practices in a half century that D'Monté draws as containing the building blocks bridging modern to contemporary practices, and demonstrates the pivotal but under-researched roles of regional and experimental theatre. The volume is also accessible to a wide public, admirably bringing to life theatrical ventures and figures that have made today's British theatre.

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Manuel Vason, with David Evans, ed.

Double Exposures. Performance as Photography, Photography as Performance

London : Live Art Development Agency; Bristol: Intellect, 2015. 200 p. £24.95.
ISBN: 978-1-78320-409-0.

Exchanges and contaminations between photography and live arts (theatre, dance, performance) have increased significantly in the last few years, both in critical research and art practice. A new generation of performers is gradually overcoming the distrust of documenting their ephemeral productions, while photography is now facing a real 'performative turn'. Photographer Manuel Vason has greatly contributed to this trend by working with some of the most provocative contemporary artists in British and international live performance.

During his decades-long collaboration, Vason has dealt with a number of key issues – copyright, the staged/unpredictable nature of photography, documentation/interpretation – and experienced different forms of collaboration, from live performance documentation to staged performance for the camera, as attested by his previous publications (*Exposures*, 2002; *Encounters*, 2007). In this book, he achieves a further and deeper degree of integration between photography and performance, engaging more than forty artists in the real process of image-making, challenging and unsettling their respective roles.

Supplied with a rich corpus of essays by scholars and curators, the book is particularly promising for theoretical reflection, also due to the strict conceptual protocol based on binary articulation that structures the entire project: two sections, two groups of artists, two images. In the first section, 'Reversing the Gaze', Vason asked twenty performance artists he had previously worked with to create two images related to their art practice, one of them involving the photographer's body instead of their own. In the second section, 'Double Image', he invited a new set of artists to think about their practice 'photographically', creating performances that were specifically conceived to be presented as two juxtaposed images.

The diptych is the main concept behind Vason's critical and aesthetic discourse. Whether its specific function be narrative, oppositional, provocative, or disorienting, the juxtaposition of two images represents an attempt to move towards a performative use of the photographic device, creating an 'in-between' space where the viewer is asked to participate.

However, the main purpose of the project – the mutual exchange between photography and performance mentioned by the book's subtitle – is not completely achieved. On the one hand, Vason's incursion into performance, negotiating his own body within the artists' practices, seems a narcissistic gesture rather than a claim to realize the actual potential of photographic performativity. On the other hand, only a few performers seem to really engage with the photographic apparatus. Most of them merely take the opportunity to explore new possibilities for site-specific actions in front of a camera, or to secure beautifully emblematic and enigmatic images of their practice.

In fact, the formal quality of these colour photographs is perhaps the most problematic feature of the entire project, for it risks normalizing and fetishizing art practices that are otherwise subversive. At the same time, however, the astonishing beauty of these images interacts with the volume's studied design, simulating a vintage book or an old photo album, and creating a sculptural, three-dimensional object that is *per se* highly performative.

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Elaine Aston and Mark O'Thomas

Royal Court: International

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 248 p.
£18.99.
ISBN: 978-1-137-46182-7.

The Royal Court Theatre in London is known by most as a new writing powerhouse, developing, nurturing, and presenting contemporary British drama and playwrighting that is 'articulating the

now often in an experimental and provocative manner. While the Royal Court's importance in cultivating new writing and devising experimental theatre works attracts much scholarly attention, its international engagements, an equally important aspect of its mission, are less frequently discussed.

Elaine Aston and Mark O'Thomas' book sets out to address this shortcoming, providing a much needed comprehensive account on the Royal Court's international projects worldwide since the late 1990s. *Royal Court: International* discusses both the histories, contexts, and methodologies of the theatre's successful international workshops and residencies, the processes and reception of their internationalist programming, and the impacts it has on both individual playwrights and different (national) theatre ecologies.

The Royal Court's International Department was founded by Stephen Daldry, artistic director of the institution in 1996, and led by Elyse Dodgson. Uniquely on the British theatre landscape, the department facilitated the development of new international plays in various national contexts globally as well as in the UK through the international residencies. As Aston and O'Thomas rightly point out, developing new work also meant development of new international relations.

Besides the project's significant cross-cultural impacts, the authors also successfully show the cultural risks embedded in 'exporting British approaches to playwriting to develop new writers in new economies'. In fact, one of the strengths of the book lies in its critical approach to show the

various influences cultural politics and policies have had on the Royal Court's international programme and its legacies. With projects often supported by the British Council, criticisms of cultural imperialism also emerged. The authors do not ignore these critical voices, but choose to highlight the project's positive impact on individual playwrights and the intercultural dialogues fostered between communities of writers, translators, actors, and directors.

The book is an important and valuable contribution also because the authors' unique approach goes beyond a historical overview and theoretical analysis to focus on a collaborative mode in discussing the theatre's internationalist agenda. Space is given to stimulating conversations with contemporary international playwrights who emerged from or were linked to the Royal Court's workshops and residencies. Building on these interviews and also often using first-hand information from past and present members of the Royal Court, Aston and O'Thomas frame their study as a collaborative venture. Different perspectives construct a multi-layered account of the Royal Court's projects, their impact, and legacies. Of course, this approach resonates with the methodologies of the theatre in developing new international writing and supporting emerging writers to develop their craft.

Royal Court: International is highly relevant reading and will be useful for both researchers and theatre-makers interested in the dynamics of cross-cultural theatrical dialogues and contemporary international playwriting.

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