

interpretation. To that end, each section includes a very useful section of production analysis. The book also includes an extremely detailed glossary offering readers explanations of all the terms and major historical events discussed in McDonagh's plays (although perhaps some entries are a little self-evident – are many readers unfamiliar with, for example, Frosties breakfast cereal and Sheba cat food?) Clearly this text is therefore designed for reading alongside the plays themselves, and an undergraduate readership will be the book's most obvious audience. Lonergan's easy conversational tone and knowledgeable discussion of the plays will, though, be of interest to a general readership interested in McDonagh's work, and this book offers a comprehensive account of his varied and occasionally controversial career to date.

CATHERINE REES

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Patrick O'Kane, ed.

Actors' Voices: the People Behind the Performances

London: Oberon Books, 2012. 302 p. £15.99.

ISBN: 978-1-84002-956-7.

Patrick O'Kane has edited this wonderful collection of interviews with an interesting and lively group of experienced actors. He has chosen a fascinating, provocative range of individuals whose different experiences amount to a broad range of invaluable insights reflecting on various aspects of acting, actor training and the acting profession, relevant to theatre lovers, professional actors, and theatre students. O'Kane has interviewed actors working in the mainstream and with independent groups, including Claire Price, Ruairi Conaghan, Mojisola Adebayo, Tim Crouch, Olwen Fouere, Gerrard McArthur, Gabriel Gawin, Selina Cadell, Simon Russell Beale, Patterson Joseph, and Jim Norton. Each interview covers a wide range of topics including auditions, preparation, rehearsals, performances, and actor training, nicely interwoven with individuals' philosophy on the role of theatre and their motivation in making it, as well as more personal areas of confidence, courage, and feeling empowered – or infantilized.

O'Kane is himself a leading actor, which lends experiential understanding to the interviews. He skilfully questions what motivates and inspires and successfully releases the profound philosophies of individuals striving to make sense of their profession, grappling with defining the process of acting, character, surviving in the business, and the sometimes powerless position they find themselves in. Interviewees generally agreed on the need within actor training for attention to building confidence, understanding of the larger professional context, and encouragement to think

outside the box. Some who had been to drama school were surprised at the lack of creative challenge and demands on them in the training process and questioned the positioning of teacher as expert.

Alongside very useful practical advice there is a yearning from some to collaborate more deeply and be included within the creative team. A cry for creative involvement and the need to be challenged came from many of these experienced, passionate artists – sometimes ignored, sometimes involved, searching for ways to express their creativity and to find alternative creative outlets, teaching, directing, making their own work, working with inspiring companies, and searching for experiences where the visceral need is satisfied. An inspiring, articulate collection of interviews to remind, stimulate, provoke, and entertain.

NIAMH DOWLING

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Rosalind Crone

Violent Victorians: Popular Entertainment in Nineteenth-century London

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012.

320 p. £16.99.

ISBN: 978-0-7190-8685-4.

Dickens's novels abound with cudgels and whips, blows, nips and pinches, child abuse, bloody rage and maddened fits. Dan Leno, 'The Funniest Man on Earth', sang, in the character of a downtrodden wife, about domestic violence. In 'I'm Waiting for Him Tonight', the husband bloodied her nose and 'While his mercy I was pleading / He was trying to dislocate my jaw' – because she burnt the dinner. It was uproariously funny.

In the circus, clowning could be hard and physical. The brawls and gang fights, a favourite spectator sport, might end up in horrible injury or death. *Violent Victorians* adds to and begins to contextualize and explore in depth aspects of this pervasive feature of nineteenth-century appetites. Casual violence sat alongside more innocent entertainment and, beginning with Punch and Judy, the author documents that puppet brute in his street environment, showing how it subverted authority – Punch persuades the hangman to hang himself! – and was then reclaimed by the bourgeois editors and readership of the satirical paper that took his name.

That tendency for the raw product to be changed and absorbed is demonstrated in the chapter 'From Scaffold Culture to the Cult of the Murderer'. Madame Tussaud's waxworks tamed the violent criminal at the same time as exploiting his fascination, offering it as a means of instruction rather than imitation. But concern about the demoralizing effects on the adolescents of the day