

Carpenter, effectively the Lilian Baylis of the North West, who managed the theatre for over forty years; to Jules Wright, a controversial artistic director from 1985 to 1986, and Kate Rowland who through her youth theatre and studio commissioning programme brought new work and energy.

While the book is organized mainly by the tenures of successive artistic directors – several of whom have contributed recollections – and acknowledges the actor-orientation of the other comparatively recent history, *An Actor's Place* (Pelham McMahon and Pam Brooks, 2000), Merkin's choice of production photographs supplies a rich visual record of celebrated Playhouse actors from Michael Redgrave and Rachel Kempson in the 1930s and Anthony Hopkins and Patrick Stewart in the 1960s to the Liverpool-born American film and TV star Kim Cattrall, who played Cleopatra to packed houses in 2010.

This is a very enjoyable book, largely constructed through the words and images of theatre makers themselves, and as such the dominant impression is of a strong emotional attachment. That said, the free interplay of voices does enable the filtering through of the conflicting aesthetic, political, and financial priorities which shaped the Playhouse's history. Merkin's judicious selection of documentary evidence merits close reading by theatre scholars, as well as the theatregoers of Liverpool.

CLAIRE COCHRANE

doi:10.1017/S0266464X13000122

*Ian R. Walsh*

**Experimental Irish Theatre: After W. B. Yeats**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 216 p.

£50.00

ISBN: 978-0-230-30095-8.

Despite the many revisionist accounts of Irish theatre history that have appeared over the past decade, immediate post-war Ireland still tends to be portrayed as a country in cultural stagnation. The period is seen as dominated by a theatre with a realist and tiresomely mimetic dramaturgy (the infamous 'Peasant Quality' at the Abbey), a conservative state-supporting politics, and out-of-print plays no longer worthy of performance. If the Second World War in neutral Ireland was 'the Emergency', the picture for many now is of bland conformity: to the iron grip of Ernest Blythe as Artistic Director of the Abbey Theatre and, more broadly, to what critic Seán O'Faoláin described as Ireland's two parliaments – one in Dublin, the other the Catholic seminary of Maynooth.

Only with the setting up of the Pike Theatre Club in Dublin in 1953 and the opening up of the Irish economy to inward capital investment in the late 1950s does Irish theatre come alive to formal experiment and the influence of international

modernism. These assumptions are exploded in Ian R. Walsh's groundbreaking work, which treats the period from the death of W. B. Yeats in 1939 to the first performance of Samuel Beckett's *En Attendant Godot* in 1953. Beginning with the death of a playwright and ending with the performance of a play in French in Paris might appear to be an awkward frame, but it does reflect accurately Walsh's twin interests: retrieving occluded Irish playwrights (chiefly Jack B. Yeats, Elizabeth Connor, Donagh MacDonagh, and Maurice Meldon) and calling attention to the wide variety of performance styles and Dublin theatre groups committed to experiment.

As in Clair Wills's *A Neutral Island* (2007), the Dublin that emerges from Walsh's book is a place of cosmopolitanism, vibrant nonconformity, and artistic adventurousness. Indeed, there was a much greater chance of watching a French, German, Italian, or Spanish play in Dublin in the 1940s and 1950s than there is of doing so today. Walsh documents the activities of Ria Mooney's Abbey Theatre Experimental Company, Austin Clarke's Lyric Theatre Company, and the daring exuberance of the 37 Theatre Club (with which the young Jack MacGowran was closely involved).

Each chapter offers a brief biography of the selected playwrights, documents the work of the different theatre groups and (using contemporary theoretical models) makes a convincing case for the intellectual coherence of Ireland's tradition of anti-mimetic theatre. This is an outstanding contribution to Irish theatre scholarship and a book that no library or teacher of Irish theatre should be without.

LIONEL PILKINGTON

doi:10.1017/S0266464X13000134

*Caridad Svich, ed.*

**Out of Silence: Censorship in Theatre and Performance**

Roskilde: EyeCorner Press, 2012. 305 p. £13.00.

ISBN: 978-87-92633-14-9.

This fascinating volume draws together no less than thirty-two academics, writers, and practitioners to offer an examination of how the exercise of (mostly) contemporaneous theatre and performance censorship reveals itself, and, most importantly, might be resisted in our current age. Edited by the playwright and translator Caridad Svich, contributions range from scholarly writing and polemic to aphoristic offerings and dialogue (reproduced blogs and email exchanges). The impressive *dramatis personae* include Bridget Bennett, Chantal Bilodeau, Marvin Carlson, Marguerite Feitlowitz, Matthew Goulish, Baz Kershaw, Dan Rebellato, Christopher Shinn, and Ken Urban. The volume comprises a substantial introductory section (in which Carlson provides an excellent