

Book Reviews

***The Methuen Drama guide to Contemporary South African Theatre*, edited by Martin Middeke, Peter Paul Schnierer and Greg Homann**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015, 384 pp. (softback)

By Amy Bonsall

The Methuen Drama guide to *Contemporary South African Theatre* brings together a multiplicity of voices that chart the complex history of theatre-making in this developing ‘rainbow nation’.

The scope of this book is wide - it aims to “straddle the full range of plays workshopped[sic], written, developed and produced during the first twenty years of South Africa’s democracy” (1). The style throughout is accessible and discusses a wide range of theatrical practices, histories, texts and productions.

Post apartheid theatrical scholarly works are numerous: *Theatre and Change in South Africa* (1996), *Theatre And Society In South Africa* (1997) *The Drama of South Africa* (1999), *South African Theatre in the Melting Pot* (2003) *Experiments in Freedom* (2010), *South African Performance and Archives of Memory* (2013) and important journals such as *The South African Theatre Journal*. The significance of this work is the full access it offers to the landscape of theatre development and production in South Africa in a single, substantial, volume.

The general introduction argues that from scrutinising over one hundred South African and chiefly English-language plays, “a detailed history emerges of the struggle against apartheid, including an account of the country’s remarkable and unprecedented transition into democracy.” (1) It offers an account

of South African political and artistic history, both national and international, including that of the culturally and politically hugely important Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This overview gives a useful grounding to understanding the artists and companies whose work is explored within the main body of the book.

‘Part I: Overview Essays’ provides a general insight into key players and innovators of the early South African theatre scene. Structured over six chapters, each chapter analyses the nature and form of specific collaborations and the “tension” between “solo playwright and the workshop tradition”, recognised as a particular feature of South African theatre practice (1). Each chapter has a separate author and the introductions and conclusions act as links, connecting all the sections together to form a cohesive whole.

‘Part II: Playwrights’ is substantial and contains chapters covering twelve of South Africa’s most influential contemporary playwrights, notably the internationally acclaimed Athol Fugard and award-winning Reza De Wet. Also included are established innovators such as Lara Foot, Zakes Mda and Paul Slabolepszy whose works have offered wide ranging responses to the racial, economic and social divides that continue to afflict post apartheid South Africa. Theatre-makers of more recent years are analysed, such as Mike Van Graan (considered the most prolific writer in the country) and Yael Farber, whose mantra is “to create theatre to wake people up and not anesthetize [sic] them” (311). Of particular interest to many will be Kevin J. Wetmore Jr.’s chapter about Brett Bailey, the divisive director, writer and designer whose *Exhibit B* (2014) was the focus of fierce protests and claims of racism when it was due to open at London’s Barbican. His chapter contextualises the theatre and

other artistic pieces Bailey has produced through exploration of the methodology and content of the works.

Chapters of particular note include Jane Taylor's 'Contemporary Collaborators 1: Kentridge/Handspring/Taylor' and Emma Durden's 'Popular Community Theatre'. In the first part of Taylor's chapter she defines theatre collaboration within a South African context. She then analyses the work of the Handspring Trust focusing on plays such as *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997) and *Zeno at 4 AM* (2001). Durden's chapter explores the history of South African Community Theatre from its roots in "township" theatre to its current form of "popular theatre *for* and *by* township-based performers". She differentiates this from European applied theatre that is led by theatre professionals for specific communities (94).

'The Theatre Makers in One-Person Format' by Veronica Baxter offers an informative overview of the solo theatre-maker and of gender divides within the practice: there are many more male 'solo' practitioners than female and Baxter reflects on the trend of male performers playing female characters (110). While acknowledging that "solo performance is an international theatrical form", Baxter makes the case for the "monopolygue" (a term coined by Paula T. Alekson) which describes a specifically physical and muscular South African style of performance (109).

Within many chapters excerpts of text are included, giving the reader exposure to each writer's voice. Complementary to the obvious scholarly value, biographical details about certain writers proves to be insightful. For example, in Chapter 14, Muff Andersson starkly describes director and writer Mphumelelo Paul Grootboom's early township life and theorises how this influenced Grootboom's most acclaimed plays, *Relativity: Township Stories* (2006) and *Foreplay* (2008). Analysing Groot-

boom's frequent use of graphic violence and complex multilingual text Andersson states: "not for nothing has he been called the township Tarantino" (241).

Greg Homann's penultimate chapter provides insights into the future voices of South African theatre as well as thoughts about funding, recent links with international venues and new courses available to those wanting to study and research theatre at tertiary level. This section provides names to watch in the future such as Juliet Jenkins and Omphile Molusi. Homann argues there remains a tendency for "the memory of apartheid" and politics to dominate playmaking but that as young theatre makers find their voices "...it just might become conceivable to think of a play that supersedes these issues of oppression." (337)

By providing windows into the South African theatre landscape, each chapter of this book offers the researcher a wealth of information. However, the focus is largely on English Language plays and for a country that has eleven official languages it is surprising to have little insight given into theatre-making undertaken in the other ten. Despite this omission, *The Methuen Drama guide to Contemporary South African Theatre* is much more substantive than a guide: it is a salutary lesson in the power that theatre has in giving voice to the individual.

***Audience as Performer* by Caroline Heim**

London and New York: Routledge, 2016, 190 pp. (softback)

By Poppy Corbett

The arrival of *Gogglebox* on our screens in 2013 was a clear sign that perhaps, as audiences, we had become more interested in ourselves than what was on the box. But are we really that interesting? The performance of audiences is the interest of Caroline

Heim's new book (though focused on the stage, not television), which richly adds to the expanding field of audience studies within theatre.¹ This valuable new addition to scholarly works aims to introduce "the concept of the audience as performer" and explore "how the embodied actions of audience members constitute a performance." (1)

This publication marks a highly significant contribution to the field because so far research that considers the active performance of the audience has mainly focused on participatory theatre in which the agency of the audience is already presumed. As Heim notes, no "book, as yet, has considered the audience primarily as performer." (7) The scope of the book is restricted to audiences at mainstream professional theatres in Western English-speaking countries. Susan Bennett has previously recognised this as an "almost entirely neglected [...] significant section of the market" (Bennett qtd. in Heim 10).

Audience as Performer's seven chapters put the question to us: who is viewing whom in the theatre? Heim suggests a shift in perspective may be useful as this is becomingly increasingly harder to discern. Not only, at times, does there seem to be an inversion of roles, but Heim considers the more substantial shift "that in the playhouse there is another troupe of performers in the auditorium: the audience." (171) The introduction offers a useful overview of the structure of the book, whilst also introducing the argument that we are in "a new age for the audience as performer." (14)

The book is structured in two parts. Part One is purely historical and offers a striking overview of audience behaviour

1 For other works in this field see: Bennett, Susan, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. New York: Routledge, 1997; Blau, Herbert, *The Audience*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1990; Corner, Lynne, *Audience Engagement and the Role of Arts Talk in the Digital Era*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Freshwater, Helen, *Theatre & Audience*. Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

in mainstream theatres from the 1800s to the 2000s. A wide variety of examples and time periods are traversed in three short chapters and the key impression is that the darkening of auditoriums was instrumental in altering audience behaviour. From the 1880s when electric lighting was introduced, theatre etiquette transformed. Demonstrative and audacious audience activity gave way to constricted and restrained behaviour (64). In Part Two, Heim analyses four key performative roles that a contemporary audience plays: critic, community, consumer and co-creator. There are four short case studies of audience behaviour to support Heim's findings: Steppenwolf, Signature Theatre, Times Square and Shakespeare's Globe.

One of the strengths of this book is that Heim's clear passion for audiences is conveyed. She labels it a "celebration of audience performance" and this spirit is transferred (175). Perhaps the inclusive feel stems from Heim's twofold perspective: she has also worked successfully as an actor on US stages. This role must have surely offered the useful embodied experience of an understanding of performance from both sides of the stage. Indeed, the book appears to have emerged from Heim's own experiences as an audience member, as well as questionnaires and extensive interviews with audience members, actors and ushers. Readers can therefore be confident that the research is breaking new scholarly ground and it deftly addresses a number of contemporary developments in the experience of the audience, including tweeting throughout the show and the purchasing of production memorabilia.

The findings reveal how audience culture has significantly changed and articulates the continued growth in demonstrative performances from those seated in the stalls. In chapter 4, "Audience as Critic", Heim especially "explores two emer-

gent vehicles for audience critique: post-show discussions and digital reviews.” (89) Chapter 5, “Audience as Community” describes the communal space of the theatre and suggests “audiences “perform” community through their ensemble performances and their socialising.” (112) In chapter 6, “Audience as Consumer”, Heim analyses the pleasures of purchasing in relation to the theatre. Chapter 7, “Audience as Co-creator” analyses the reciprocal nature of performance.

The most memorable moments come from the inclusion of titbits of knowledge and anecdotal evidence of ‘bad’ audience behaviour throughout the ages: the “throwing of food missiles” in the 1800s (59) and the outrageous unverified account that in 2011 a couple recurrently booked West End theatre boxes for the purposes of making love (156). Heim also offers illuminating analysis of the language used by her interviewees: for instance, the term “experience” was used “57 times to describe what it means for them to be going to the theatre”, whilst “event” was used only thirteen (136).

Whilst the content of the book is fascinating and the prose with which it is conveyed fluid, perhaps adequate attention has not been given to the problem of the audience and, therein, the problem of studying them. Whilst Heim acknowledges that some things are difficult to quantify (how might one produce a rigorous scholarly analysis of an audience member’s awkwardly-timed fidget, for example?), it would be useful to have more insight into the challenges of the methodologies used in this research. A noteworthy omission is that hardly any directors, producers and creatives other than actors are interviewed. Whilst there is only so much scope a book like this can offer, Heim’s study paves the way for a consideration of how the performance of the audience might affect creative choices made by directors

and producers.

Audience as Performer will be useful to both students and academics alike: it provides a thorough historical contextualisation of audiences throughout time, draws on interesting theoretical concepts and uses practical examples to demonstrate that mainstream audiences can “become emancipated audience communities because they are given permission to perform in relaxed environments that privilege audience creativity.” (172) Studying the audience is still a somewhat neglected field and one strangely distrusted by a large number of academics who are more concerned with what happens on the boards, than off them. The mistrust in the value of this research is strange because if theatre is not for audiences, then who is it for? This book provides a comprehensive and welcome refocusing of this debate.

***Collaboration in Performance Practice: Premises, Workings and Failures*, edited by Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaeir**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 311 pp. (hardback)

By Sarah Hoover

Performers and those whom Erin Manning terms “researchers-creators” (133) experience increasing pressure to collaborate in both academia and practice. Most publications on this topic are either practical guides akin to Robert Cohen’s *Working Together in Theatre* or examinations of specific practices such as Beth Weinstein’s study of Merce Cunningham and John Cage. *Collaboration in Performance Practice: Premises, Workings and Failures* presents practical examinations of the logistics of collaboration while also addressing a gap in the critical analysis of the various aesthetics, ethics and theoretical underpinnings of

collaborative processes.

Editors Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaier explore issues raised at their two Middlesex University symposia, drawing critical attention to the theoretical background of collaborative practice. Their introduction refers to Kathryn Syssoyeva's *A History of Collective Creation* (2013) for a historical background to the shortcomings of contemporary discourse, which Syssoyeva notes "is still permeated by ideologically-informed reading which prioritize New Left ideas of consensual decision-making and leaderlessness over those that entertain a more richly textured set of practices in radical collective work." (Syssoyeva qtd. in Colin and Sachsenmaier, 2)

The relational formation and reformation of identity becomes a through-line of the volume. Martina Ruhsam presents a Heideggerian analysis of collaboration, opposing collaboration to collectivity in her argument for a retained individual identity. Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca takes a Deleuzian look at Goat Island's rehearsal process. Susan Melrose provides a broad theoretical investigation of compromises required of individual expert identity in collaboration. Other authors in the collection address the implications of these philosophical concepts, writing on historical collaborations, collaborative configurations and on the cultural, social, ethical and political implications of collaboration for individual artists involved.

Part I, "Premises - Modelling Collaborative Performance-Making" views collaborative identities through an ethical and political lens. Andrea Kolb argues that Wagner's concept *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total art) continues to shape current collaborative practices either through adoption or reaction, "reflecting different models of democracy" (71). Addressing labour (particularly affective labour) in collaboration Noyale Colin argues

that the process of complex collaborative labour involves a deskilling and reskilling of artists which both problematizes individual authorship and demands the artists involved transform “at the level of individual subjectivity.” (125) Simon Murray, on the other hand, traces neoliberal influences in the economics of collaboration and challenges the politics behind calls to collaborate. In his chapter “Contemporary Collaborations and Cautionary Tales” he engages with the political background of collaboration in any business by asking toward what end collaboration is “a means to manage time more productively, to enable difficult decisions [...] to be made more swiftly and with minimal conflict, a means to manage (and justify) labour mobility more smoothly and a strategy to secure employee loyalty to the corporate brand” (32).

Both Murray and Manning provide specific questions and suggestions for those researching and practicing collaborations. For example, Murray’s checklist asks practitioners to consider: “For whose benefit is this collaboration being proposed? How is power practised within collaboration? What are the long-term consequences of this collaboration?” (33). Similarly, the headings of Manning’s manifesto suggest considerations for collaborative practice: “Create New Forms of Knowledge (Embrace the Non-Linguistic)” and “Practice Thinking (Don’t be Afraid of Philosophy)” (133).

Issues of authorial identity frame specific examples of collaboration in Part II, “Workings-Ways of Practising Collaboration”. In “The Author of the Gift” Tim Jeeves addresses authorship directly through his practice, examining ways to question the origin of a piece of art and negotiating the necessities of identifying those origins. Kris Salata examines Jerzy Grotowski’s work not as “some universal social models of collaboration,

but rather in what uniquely can happen between two people” (183). Carol Brown and Moana Nepia reflect on their individual cultural identities and resist the resolution of a collaboration toward product. Instead, they search for dialogical conversation in alignment with the Māori concept of *Te Kore*, “...void, absence and nothingness also understood as a space or time of potentiality” (197).

This dialogical conversation is carried into Susan Melrose’s opening to Part III, ‘Failures – Compromising and Negotiating the Collaborative Self’. In her essay “Positive Negatives: Or the Subtle Arts of Compromise” Melrose engages with productive compromise and the risks to individual identity which are necessary to collaborative performance-making: “This fracturing of the self, that I am arguing is constitutive of (expert) identity in the collaborative practitioner, is not immediately absorbed but opens identity up...” (256). In resisting and compromising collective working, individual identity is continually reformed as a necessary part of the collaborative process. An example of this is Sachsenmaier’s examination of the research-practice ArtsCross, a dance collaboration across an east-west cultural divide (“Productive Misapprehensions: ArtsCross as a Cross-Cultural Collaborative Zone of Contestation of Contemporary Dance Practice”). Here she contends with the locality of practitioners and the cultural configurations which separate or join their identities, altering them and at the same time hardening them. What does this relational formulation of identity unbalance in the process, and how is that off-balancedness, often read as failure, productive? Emilyn Claid presents a practical example (“Messy Bits”) as artistic director of a dance collaboration across social and racial divides titled *Grace and Glitter*. Questions of success or failure in performance are interrogated, as well as by what crite-

ria performances are judged. Is the process of collaboration the smoothing of differences and how then can the product reflect the ongoing changes to identity in the process?

In addition to the processual reviews which ground the book, several essays are written in non-traditional styles providing unique avenues into identity formulation. Manning's "Ten Propositions for Research-Creation", a manifesto of practices and concepts, bullet-points complex ideas into action items. Forster & Heighes' reflections on printers' symbols, part process journal and part extreme tangent, are an open but intense means of exploring their unique collaborative process. The conversational record in de Senna's essay makes visible the negotiation of 'normal' among the societal expectations of abled/disabled performance. These alternative writing methods encourage readers to alter their viewpoints and identify where they resonate with the authors' experiences or perhaps push against them. The writing techniques themselves emphasize the relational characteristics of identity politics.

While several of the performances examined in the book, such as Jeeves' *Bodies in Space*, identify audiences as some part of the collaborative process (as objects to which affective experiences attach), few of the chapters take note of performances in which the spectator is considered a collaborator. This is unsurprising as many academic reviews of performance practice engage primarily with the process of rehearsal, separating those performed-with from those performed-for. In their introduction Colin and Sachsenmaier also lean toward discussion of expert practitioners and their experiences, which creates useful boundaries to the experimental sandbox. However, many of the same issues of production and consumption, relational identity and individual or collective success/failure dichotomies are present

in audience experience, as Brian Massumi's writings on interactive performance demonstrate. This is particularly relevant as immersive and participatory performances become mainstream.

This collection is a refocusing of research into collaboration towards processual issues of identity, relationship, labour and the implications of those issues to researchers and performers. The mix of theoretical and practical concepts, historical contextualization and suggestions for future research and practice provides a useful foundation in collaborative theory for researchers and creators.

***The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy* edited by Magda Romanska**

London and New York: Routledge, 2015, 533 pp. (softback)

By Emer McHugh

“Dramaturgy is for me learning how to handle complexity. It is feeding the ongoing conversation on the work; it is taking care of the reflexive potential as well as of the poetic force of the creation. Dramaturgy is building bridges; it is being responsible for the whole. Dramaturgy is above all a constant movement. Inside and outside.” (165) These are the closing remarks from Marianne Van Kerkhoven's contribution to the extensive and expansive *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, which I would wager captures the essence of this volume's ethos. If this edited collection has a thesis or argument, it is that the practice of dramaturgy does not carry a singular definition. Lawrence Switzky calls it “a job perennially in search of a description” (173), whereas Jules Odendahl-Jones claims that “almost no one has the faintest idea what dramaturgs do or what dramaturgy is.” (381) It seems that what dramaturgy ‘is’ or what dramaturgs ‘do’

is constantly fluctuating.

Magda Romanska's collection honours the diverse and varied nature of dramaturgical practice: the volume is carefully curated into eight sections, stretching over five hundred pages. Given its length, scope and focus, it is impossible to fully evaluate this collection in a few short paragraphs, but I shall offer a few impressions. The range of this book is, as stated, quite extensive: its depth is impressive. Its sections take into account world dramaturgy; dramaturgy and globalization; the dramaturg as mediator and context manager (contexts being transculturalism, translation, adaptation, and contextualisation); dramaturgy in other art forms, such as film, dance, musical theatre, and gaming; the dramaturg in public relations, among others.

As well as this, not only are these essays multifarious in scope, but they are also manifold in their written form. Its first section focuses on world dramaturgy and it was particularly satisfying to see the focus was not solely on Europe and North America, but also dramaturgical practices in Syria, Australia, India, Brazil and Latin America. And if we move into specificities, Fadi Fayad Skeiker's contribution on Syrian dramaturgy is part analysis and part dialogue (it concludes with an interview with dramaturg Mayson Ali). Elinor Fuchs' essay, reprinted from *Theatre*, is a "walk through dramatic structure" and the questions one should ask of a play, informing the reader that this is a "teaching tool" that she uses with her students (403). Anne Cattaneo's contribution is largely given over to her "six short maxims – a summation of what I know", also intended for dramaturgy students (242). One essay is a pair of shorter reflections by Anne Bogart and Jackson Gay on, suitably enough, the process of collaboration. Many of the contributors write about their own practice as dramaturgs, or choose to reflect on other

other companies and institutions' work. It is also worth noting that some, like Fuchs' contribution, are reprinted from their earlier journal forms: here, new perspectives operate in tandem with their predecessors.

What is also encouraging, too, is the inclusion of essays seeking to interrogate, as Romanska states in her introduction, "the privileges and responsibilities of the literary office" (8) – 'responsibilities' here being the instructive word. As Julie Felise Dubiner asks in her essay, "Who are we doing this for?" (251): this question reverberates throughout a number of contributions to the collection. Here, Marianne Combs' evaluation of the Guthrie Theatre's 2013-2014 season, which was notable for "the absence of women and minorities among the playwrights and directors" (256) and then-artistic director Joe Dowling's defensive response to the subsequent outcry makes for quite a pertinent read in the context of the #WakingTheFeminists movement in Irish theatre, sparked by similar circumstances. Furthermore, contributions by Faedra Chatard Carpenter, Debra Caplan, and Walter Byonsok Chon highlight issues surrounding race and interculturalism in dramaturgy: I was particularly struck by Chon's essay on his experiences working on Danai Gurira's *Eclipsed* (a play set in the Liberian civil war) and his contention of the potentiality of "the dramaturg's contribution to reach beyond the rehearsal room and continue after the closing of the production" as "cultural liaison" (140). This might sound quite utopian to the reader, but it does indicate the multiple roles that the dramaturg and literary offices see themselves enacting. It is also encouraging to witness an intersectional approach being taken towards appraising dramaturgy.

Thus, the collection is at times instructive and often self-reflective. It functions as an introduction to dramaturgy in

theory and practice, as well as facilitating a conversation about the profession and even acting as a survey of recent practice. To me, Romanska's collection is a statement as to where contemporary dramaturgical practice is at present, whilst also envisioning its future(s). Certainly, the book is always in dialogue with its forerunners – here, Gotthold Lessing casts a large shadow over the collection, as do more contemporaneous examples such as Hans-Thies Lehmann and Fuchs¹ – yet I would contend that it is always, always looking forward towards the futures of the practice as well. To summarise, Romanska's collection is a useful tool and it is also a collection that effectively demonstrates and celebrates the complexity of theatrical dramaturgy. With its compiling of multiple voices, techniques, perspectives, and techniques into one compendium – once again, facilitating a conversation seems appropriate in this context – it is a singular, vital, and necessary contribution to the field.

***Bakhtin and Theatre: Dialogues with Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Grotowski* by Dick McCaw**

Abingdon: Routledge, 2016, 247 pp. (paperback)

By James Rowson

Mikhail Bakhtin lived from 1895 to 1975, a fecund time in the evolution of theatre practice. Eastern Europe (and in particular Bakhtin's homeland of Russia) spearheaded innovations in methods of staging, set design, actor training and the role of

1 For example, please see Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) and Fuchs' "E.F.'s Visit to a Small Planet: Questions to Ask a Play", *Theatre* 34.2 (2004), 5-9, which – as mentioned elsewhere in this review – is reprinted in this collection. With regards to Lessing, a peer-to-peer new translation of *Hamburg Dramaturgy* is forthcoming from Routledge, and is at present available online. See <http://mcpres.media-commons.org/hamburg/> for details, as well as Wendy Arons, "The 'Open-Sourced' *Hamburg Dramaturgy*: A Twenty-first-Century Invitation to Interact with an Eighteenth Century Work in Progress", *Theatre Topics* 24.2 (June 2014): 145-148.

theatre director in the wake of the abolition of the imperial monopoly on theatre in 1882. *Bakhtin and Theatre: Dialogues with Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Grotowski* by Dick McCaw is the first full-length study to contextualise Bakhtin's writings in the framework of three salient directors who were active during his lifespan: Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Jerzy Grotowski. In a broad sense, the study acts as a nexus between philosophy and theatre studies, offering an enlivened reevaluation of the practice and writings of these three revolutionaries while contemporaneously elucidating Bakhtin's key theories.

The publication of this monograph is timely, as the body of academic work on these directors continues to grow.¹ Departing from previous studies, however, *Bakhtin and Theatre* reflects on how the practitioners interrogated by McCaw "illuminate" Bakhtin's philosophical inquiries, foregrounding questions of action, character and actor training (8). *Bakhtin and Theatre* does not simply document the preeminent productions of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Grotowski, but instead facilitates a "dialogue" between the writings of Bakhtin and the theatre practice and theories of his dramatic contemporaries (1). In doing so, McCaw offers a long-awaited rethinking of Bakhtin's philosophy, appropriating his "phenomenological approach" to the construction of character as a cynosure to theatre studies and the actor's creative process (216). Emanating from *Bakhtin and Theatre's* primary focus is a re-analysis of the personal and professional relationship between these giants of twentieth-century theatre through the theoretical framework of the Bakhtian concept of the dialogic. McCaw describes how previous studies of

¹ For example, Shevtsova, Maria 'Stanislavsky to Grotowski: Actor to Performer/Doer' in *NTQ* 30.4, 2014, pp 333-340; Skinner, Amy. *Meyerhold and the Cubists: Perspectives on Painting and Performance*. Bristol: Intellect, 2015; Laster, Dominika. *Grotowski's Bridge Made of Memory: Embodied Memory, Witnessing and Transmission in the Grotowski Work*. Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2015.

Stanislavsky and Meyerhold amalgamate their “two voices into one” (150). *Bakhtin and Theatre* resists this approach, instead arguing that their work should be read as two separate voices in dialogue with each other.

Over six chapters McCaw situates the work of Bakhtin in the theatrical and historical context of Russia and eastern Europe in the twentieth century, beginning in the moribund Russian Empire and ending with Grotowski in communist Poland in the 1970s. Part One (“Bakhtin and Theatre”) introduces the reader to Bakhtin’s relationship with the theatre, through both biographical observations and close readings of his literary output. This insightful section traces Bakhtin’s interest in theatre from his childhood, observing the evolution of his engagement with the dramatic arts as his theories evolved, revealing that theatre was a constant reference throughout his work. This opening section acknowledges that although drama was never a primary consideration in Bakhtin’s work his ideas on dialogue and the novel can be utilised to unlock theatrical problems and questions relevant to contemporary theatre practice.

Part Two (“Bakhtin and Stanislavsky”) consists of three chapters that identify and explore connections between Bakhtin’s theories and the written work of Stanislavsky. In these chapters McCaw focuses on Bakhtin’s early works *Author and the Hero* and *Philosophy of the Act* to create a “dialogue” with Stanislavsky’s writings on theatre (1). These three chapters are connected through the importance of the notion of character in both men’s respective thinking. McCaw convincingly demonstrates that Bakhtin’s early writings can be read as vital sources for theatre-makers’ “understanding of characterisation” (144), particularly when read in dialogue with Stanislavsky’s *My Life in Art* and *An Actor’s Work*. By aligning Bakhtin’s early works

with Stanislavsky, this section of *Bakhtin and Theatre* is interesting in further elucidating Bakhtin's theory within the context of the political and artistic climate in Russia in the early twentieth century. As a result, McCaw fills an important gap in academic literature, expounding Bakhtin's complex early theories into a more lucid context for practitioners and students of theatre.

As the section on Bakhtin and Stanislavsky underscores, McCaw does not simply focus on Bakhtin's most famous work *Rabelais and his World* (1965). Part Three ("Meyerhold and Grotowski"), however, returns to Bakhtin's later works written in the 1920s and beyond. Here, *Bakhtin and Theatre* draws parallels between Meyerhold's reinvention of the traditions of popular theatre in Russia in the 1920s and 30s, with Bakhtin's theories on carnival and the carnivalesque. McCaw acknowledges the divergences between Bakhtin and Meyerhold's use of the carnival and popular theatre, while highlighting their shared interest in Venetian playwright Carlo Gozzi. The focus here is on Bakhtin's assertion that "footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance" (7). McCaw argues that Meyerhold's innovative productions demonstrate that theatre can remove the boundaries between actor and audience, analogous to Bakhtin's carnival.

Bakhtin and Theatre concludes with a chapter on Grotowski and Bakhtin that similarly offers new perspectives. The focus is specifically on Grotowski's work that occurred before Bakhtin's death in 1975. As with the sections on Stanislavsky and Meyerhold this chapter constructs a dialogue between Bakhtin and the practice and writings of Grotowski. Contiguous to this is McCaw's narrative of how the theatrical baton was handed from Stanislavsky to Meyerhold and subsequently to Grotowski in the 1950s.

Bakhtin and Theatre is an insightful work in the field of theatre studies and provides new insight into both Bakhtin's philosophy and three vanguards of twentieth century theatre. The original framework of the monograph encourages a deep engagement with the subject matter and opens up a significant vinculum between Bakhtin and the contemporary theatre practices of his time in eastern Europe. While McCaw suggests that his readership will primarily be comprised of theatre scholars and students rather than philosophers (66), this eloquent monograph will speak to both those interested in theatre studies in general and also the writings of Bakhtin. This is a vital dialogue that will illuminate Bakhtin for students of theatre, and also demonstrates how Bakhtin's works are fertile ground for further understanding the development of theatre practice and performance in the twentieth century and beyond.