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Review of Garde, U., & Severn, J.R. (Eds.) (2021). Theatre and internationalization. Perspectives from Australia, Germany, and beyond. Routledge.

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The views and opinions expressed in the book reviews are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of SCENARIO.

Since early 2020, we have experienced globalization in an unprecedented way: global lockdowns, global loss, global vaccination, global attempts to retrieve what we once knew as "normal". Global, yet not experienced in the same way nor bearing the same impact on all human lives. The theatre landscape, from local to international, has been undoubtedly shaken to the core, as one of its most essential atavistic characteristics was taken away: bodies and voices sharing a time and space. Curated by Ulrike Garde and John R. Severn against an incidental pandemic backdrop, *Theatre and Internationalization* is unaffected by the most widespread event in recent history, in content and scope. Hereon, references to the pandemic and its repercussions will be inevitable, which makes the insightful studies presented in the volume stand as a valuable witness wall.

The project emerged, as the editors acknowledge, from a conference hosted by Macquarie University and the Goethe-Institut Australia in Sydney, back in 2019. The timeline for the release of the book, under two years since the initial event, is rather remarkable and one feels compelled to request advice on many an aspect of project management from those involved, especially since the volume is impeccably presented. Structured in five content blocks, readers will find an introduction by the editors and twelve studies covering a broad range of aspects under the overarching theme of theatre and internationalization, from a range of perspectives.

In the introductory chapter, "Theatre(s) and internationalization(s)", Garde and Severn consider the terms and conditions under which theatre internationalization takes place, pertinently pointing the reader towards a consideration of the multiplicity of extra-theatrical factors that govern performances and their framing, from legislative matters to mores and norms. They then zoom in to the case of a stage form that is 'born international' (if we could playfully borrow Rebecca Walkowitz's 'born translated' coinage): the megamusical. Their

discussion of the genre is insightful and nuanced, if occasionally too reliant on counter arguing previous works. I, for one, truly enjoyed the authors' engagement with performative, technical and economic aspects, and their balanced consideration of the "evils" of commercialisation, problematizing often subjective critiques in the name of art. It is easy for the reader to forget that this is an introduction, and only afterwards the section may feel like a stand-alone chapter that has also taken on this extra responsibility. By then, the excellent and varied examples presented by the authors have already awakened our curiosity.

Part 2 presents diverse "snapshots from the twentieth century to the present day", including 1930s operetta, Aboriginal performance in the 1960s and 70s, and the fascinating story of a touring acrobatic act in the mid-1950s. Some key points raised in this work are delineated here, one being the consideration of many different modes of stage practice, unbound by limited/limiting definitions of theatre as text-based storytelling from a proscenium, something the chosen title does not quite capture.

To single out some insightful contributions from this section, Jonathan Bollen presents in "Visualizing the entrepreneurial networks of international entertainment" a rich account of how aviation led to "the transformation of international networks" (p. 56), opening new circuits to Australian performers. He approaches the case of The Dalrays from a multifaceted theoretical framework, as well as applying cartographic methods to provide visual representations of mobility. Indeed, one of the strongest points of this volume is the way in which the readers are provided with tools, in the form of conceptual frameworks, which they may take away and apply to other objects of research. Such is the case with Sally Blackwood's chapter on opera internationalization from a director's perspective, "Collaborative creation across borders and art forms". Incidentally, the author equips us for further scrutiny of post-pandemic artistic creation.

In Part 3, "Language and text in theatre and internationalization" the focus is shifted onto language. Garde's study, "Negotiating unfamiliar languages and accents in contemporary theatre" scrutinizes approaches to multilingual works in the German and Australian stages in relation to performer mobility and institutional policies. In her discussion of a discussion of "de-internationalization" trends and contemporary opera libretti, Amy Stebbins problematizes traditional understandings of "opera nations", linking institutional practices to national identity and, in turn, to "personal identity": where the opera discourse from the institution exhibits a focus on national identity, she argues, libretti present identity "as fixed, binary, and discreet" (p. 129). Both the premise and the cases studies are compelling, even though the rationale for side-by-side analysis is not entirely clear.

With only two chapters, Part 4 is not only shorter, but its purpose is also comparatively less defined. Under the overarching epigraph "Internationalization in contemporary theatre", it brings together studies on "Contemporary German-speaking theatre makers" and "brand Ibsen" in Australia and Germany. Despite the emphasis on "contemporary" practice that both the section and chapter titles may indicate, Birgfeld – refreshingly – acknowledges in his contribution the long history of internationalization across the European stages, which is treated for the most part as a 20th and 21st century phenomenon throughout the volume. He manages to portray the richness and incredible heterogeneity of the stage craft(s). In the second chapter of the section, Margaret Hamilton examines contemporary adaptations of canonical 19th-century plays. The exploratory quality of the piece does not detract from the absolute contemporaneity and currency of the materials analysed.

Part 5, "Internationalization, performers, audiences, institutions" gathers contributions on those themes from a range of viewpoints. In "Migration and Theatre in Berlin", Brangwen Stone explores "a city's engagement through theatre with its migrant and postmigrant populations", in the work of the Exil Ensemble at the Maxim Gorki Theatre and the Komische Oper Berlin. While internationalization is mostly approached as an outwards movement, Stone pertinently proposes a close look at diverse, multilingual, multicultural performer ensembles and their insertion in the theatre landscape. The following chapter, "Young artists, international markets: Legitimizing myths and institutional strategies", scrutinises the dynamics of internationalization as a "legitimizing myth", utilized by cultural institutions. Hoesch turns our attention to young performers who are not yet established and to festivals, which – he argues – "provide an invaluable opportunity for a theatre to demonstrate its ceremonial conformity to legitimizing myths: their festive nature and public interest allow for the prestigious celebration of a myth, while the organization's lasting character can remain unaffected by it" (p. 218). Also thought-provoking is the author's warning to look at internationalization "as a deeply ambivalent phenomenon" (p. 217), at least from a theatre perspective. The contribution that closes the volume, "International percolations of disability aesthetics in dance and theatre" shares in the caution and critical stance with regards to internationalization flows in theatre practice to interrogate the place of disability aesthetics in contemporary dance. The perspective adopted is predominantly that of the practitioners and stakeholders involved in the creative process, which warrants currency and relevance to Czymoch, Maguire-Rosier and Schmidt's sensitive and aware exposition.

Theatre and internationalization prompts readers to reflect across a broad range of topics and presents them with useful tools to carry out further study. The studies found here will be particularly useful towards developing a language to articulate the complex realities of stage practice and performance, drawing from a considerable theoretical apparatus. The case-study

approach grounds the contributions and ensures their concreteness, in an area of study that would otherwise risk falling into sterile abstraction. The volume is impeccably edited and perhaps the only remnant of hastiness is the section distribution, as the rationale for the grouping of contributions is not always crystal clear, not unusual in the publication of proceedings. Nevertheless, the many instances of useful cross-referencing throughout allow us to dip in and out, yet still get a sense of the narrative. The relevance of each study in relation to the overarching themes is direct and transparent. Ulrike Garde and John R. Severn have brought us a collection of essays born from a landscape that is no more, that successfully display the multifaceted nature of theatre practices and their intrinsic interconnectedness to economic, political, social factors. Although the world stage has been through many a transformation since the inception of this project, I am confident that researchers will delve into these essays not just as a witness wall but, undoubtedly, as a way forward.