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***Eurasian Theatre: Drama and Performance between East and West from Classical Antiquity to the Present.* By Nicola Savarese. Holstebro, Malta and Wroclaw: Icarus Publishing Enterprise, 2010. Pp. 640. €27 Hb.**

Christel Weiler

Theatre Research International / Volume 37 / Issue 01 / March 2012, pp 90 - 91

DOI: 10.1017/S0307883311000630, Published online: 26 January 2012

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0307883311000630

How to cite this article:

Christel Weiler (2012). *Theatre Research International*, 37, pp 90-91 doi:10.1017/S0307883311000630

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Despite the success of both these books, some questions and concerns remain. In most of the chapters, the scholarship has failed to see the interplays and interrelationships between gender and caste, which is 'the central factor for the subordination of the [Indian] upper caste [middle-class] women' (Uma Chakarvarti, 'Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 (April 1993), pp. 579–585, here p. 579) – because the representation of Indian middle-class women is less about the representation of women or womanhood and more about that of upper-caste values through women. Any discourse on gender in India simply cannot ignore the interplays of caste and class. Caste should not become a focus only in relation to lower-caste performances; rather caste needs to be seen as a constitutive element of gender.

The historicization of actresses' questions, along with caste and labour, may give a completely different picture to the present discourse, as it appears in Rege's essay. Perhaps it is for this reason that in both these books there is an uncritical appreciation of court culture. Recent scholarly research shows that colonialism (in India) did not destroy all existing traditional hierarchical relationship of caste, class and gender; rather it saw feudalism and aristocracy as its allies. Another criticism alludes to the importance of text. Text still constitutes the major source of both these books. The authors should have also engaged more with artistic and aesthetic aspects, and the inclusion of more illustrations would enhance these publications. In spite of these minor criticisms and limitations, both these books make a significant contribution to Indian theatre and performance and are also important in terms of interdisciplinary research.

Theatre Research International, 37.1 doi:10.1017/S0307883311000630

Eurasian Theatre: Drama and Performance between East and West from Classical Antiquity to the Present. By Nicola Savarese. Holstebro, Malta and Wrocław: Icarus Publishing Enterprise, 2010. Pp. 640. €27 Hb.

Reviewed by Christel Weiler, Freie Universität Berlin, christel.weiler@fu-berlin.de

This book was published for the first time in Italian, and in 2010 Icarus Publishing Enterprise published this deservedly revised and extended English edition that makes the text accessible to broader audiences – academic and beyond. Far from being outdated, Nicola Savarese's historical research is still an urgent text today. At a time when culturally constructed borders are increasingly dissolved, it is of paramount importance to trace back the historical dimensions of the manifold encounters between Eastern and Western performance and theatre practices.

Savarese presents himself as a somewhat old-fashioned scholarly storyteller – a disguise that is appropriate to his subject: the history of exchanges, interweaving, diffusion of theatrical knowledge and techniques. In six chapters he deliberately guides the reader through consolidated findings and speculative terrain at the same time. What we are confronted with are encounters between peoples and cultures. Savarese's historical account starts with antiquity and ends in the twentieth century with a chapter about Eugenio Barba's anthropological studies and experiments.

The book's achievements are various. First, it is a wonderful introduction to the history of interweaving and entanglement, as well as being aware of the problems of historiography. To the scholarly reader who is interested in all the complexities that connect theatre to histories of war, commerce, barter, migration, religion, travel, etc., Savarese's book reveals cultural relationships that are made of closeness and distance, similarity and difference concurrently. The study reveals that our knowledge of each other results from observation, imagination, projection and construction at the same time.

Whereas the first chapters are presented in a more speculative way and based on the assumption that heterogeneous elements in a given culture disperse, diffuse and gradually are absorbed, later chapters display single biographies and different patterns for the reception and cognition of theatre works. Of course, we meet here all the well-known names we know from the European history of theatre.

Finally, the author rightly suggests throughout the book that the history of drama and theatre should be seen separately. This does, however, not prevent him from addressing the impact that texts and their respective translations – like the Indian dramatic poem *Sakuntala* – have had on the history of theatre and all the diffusions and encounters.

Theatre Research International, 37.1 doi:10.1017/S0307883311000642

***La Boite: The Story of an Australian Theatre Company.* By Christine Comans.**

Brisbane: Playlab Press, 2009. Pp. 352 + illus. \$55 Pb.

Reviewed by Glenn D'Cruz, Deakin University, glenn.dacruz@deakin.au

Drawing on a comprehensive range of archival material and interviews, Christine Comans has produced an eminently readable account of one of Australia's most significant theatre companies, Brisbane's La Boite. From its beginnings as the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society (BRTS) to its most recent incarnation as a contemporary company devoted to producing exclusively Australian works, La Boite has been a major player in the development of Australian Theatre. Comans's book traces the vicissitudes in La Boite's fortunes over the last eighty or so years, providing evocative sketches of the personalities and events that have shaped the organization's artistic and political agenda along the way.

The book also functions as an index of how Australian society, and the city of Brisbane, dramatically transformed itself from having a somewhat insular colonial culture to being a self-assured, cosmopolitan city confident of its own creative abilities. La Boite has its roots in the British repertory movement, which positioned itself in opposition to the dominant commercial theatre that eschewed aesthetic merit in favour of profit. By contrast, the founders of the BRTS, Barbara Sisley and Professor J. J. Stable, made a major contribution to the cultural life of Brisbane in the period between the two world wars by choosing plays for their literary and pedagogical qualities. However, artistic innovation is not without its pitfalls as these stalwart promoters of theatrical excellence discovered in 1931 when they awarded their inaugural prize for Australian playwriting to George Landen Dann for his work *In Beauty It Is Finished*. Dann's play