

in Cuba, Cariad Astles writes a concise, comprehensive history of diasporic performance and performers. Debunking Castro's post-revolutionary ideal of a post-racial nation, Astles illuminates African inflections of performing bodies in popular forms that employ carnival traditions, playwriting, ritual, puppet theatre, and religion. Astles's essay provides a useful grounding for Conrad James's literary analysis of Eugenio Hernández Espinosa's plays *El Sacrificio* and *María Antonia*, which explore blackness, gender representation, pre-revolutionary Cuban history, and African connections. James finds that Hernández "exalts the African-Cuban worldview," but nonetheless illuminates "contradictions within religious culture" (49) that may "victimize" individuals (particularly women) much as "larger socio-political forces marginalize the entire black community" (49).

Moving the focus away from West Africa's influence on the Americas, Sabrina Brancato turns to Italy, focusing on three case studies to explore the dialogic practice of what she calls "interculture"—vigorous artistic collaboration between recognizably divergent cultural traditions, such as those in East Africa and Italy. Brancato's descriptions of this very exciting new work emphasize "transcultural process[es] of exchange and transformation" that occur in a spirit of conviviality, by which she means "living and feasting together" (63) as well as what Paul Gilroy describes as a practice of "spontaneous tolerance and openness" (Gilroy, qtd. in Brancato 63). Rob Baum, invoking the dual diaspora of Ethiopian Jews—in Israel, displaced from Africa, and in Africa, displaced from Israel—considers the Israeli dance group Eskesta, whose members are of Ethiopian origin. Baum uses the language of hybridity to describe the group's choreography, and examines how this history informs the group's dance. Baum's lively descriptions of the company's performances suggest optimism about its future and that of its hybrid dance genre. Mary Anderson applies a necessary critical lens to officially sponsored community performance in Tasmania. Analyzing *Windpiece* as a byproduct of government initiatives that promote policies of immigration and multiculturalism, Anderson finds that it nonetheless reassessed hegemonic power relations between white Australians and immigrant Africans. Indeed, Anderson notes, the cultural differences the creators aimed to elide in their officially sponsored vision of multicultural harmony resurfaced in the production process. Although African voices were absent in the piece's creation and audiences were almost wholly nonimmigrant, many of the African-community-member performers evidently felt that the circumstances of their immigration obliged them to perform the music and spoken words assigned by the piece's creators.

Other substantial contributions to the volume include a research compendium, an interview, and a play. Yvonne Brewster's brief sourcebook for black British theatre in London in the 1970s and '80s is incredibly useful, featuring biographical entries on individuals and theatre companies, short descriptions and histories of theatres and arts centers, and lists of plays with dates. This extensive but compact exploration allows Brewster, herself the founder of one such company, to give a clear sense of this unique period of production and proliferation. Jane Plastow's interview with Lemn Sissay recounts the playwright's experience of finding his roots and expressing them through theatre in his third play, *Something Dark*. The interview captures both the production process and some of Sissay's ideas on exile and the diasporic person's process of self-definition. The playscript included in the volume is perhaps more timely now than when first released, given the recent political upheaval in Egypt. Translator Mona Khedr introduces Khaled El-Sawy's *Messing with the Mind*, which premiered in Cairo in 2004. El-Sawy's play raises for discussion some very prickly issues in the political and social life of the contemporary Middle East, using political satire to critique "the evils of globalisation and its concomitant imperial inferences" (113).

As a contribution to the field of diaspora studies or to the respective diasporas represented, this book is substantial and toothsome. But given its diffuse geographic and disciplinary focus and categorization as a work on African theatre, I worry that it may have some difficulty finding its way to the most interested readers. Nonetheless, as the range of topics described above suggests, this contribution to the African Theatre series makes a bold play for some unexpected and underrepresented regions in African diaspora studies.

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**WORLD STAGES, LOCAL AUDIENCES: ESSAYS ON PERFORMANCE, PLACE, AND POLITICS.** By Peter Dickinson. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010; pp. 272.

Focusing primarily on queer identities (specifically Canadian queer identities), Peter Dickinson's research is wide-ranging, covering a variety of materials and embracing a broad notion of performance to address a large swath of cultural expression. His most recent work, *World Stages, Local Audiences*, takes on everything from artworks and creative practices that defy genre distinctions to rites of passage, public pageantry, political debate, professional athletics,

and the creation of the self. He uses this expanded view of performance to consider how the locale of a performance alters its meaning for audiences, and also to question the effects on local audiences of global politics and cultural tourism. Often beginning from his location in Vancouver, Dickinson's writing moves in a gyroscopic manner, arching outward, tracing curves and patterns through an international community of artists, politicians, athletes, and spectators before returning again to Vancouver and to Dickinson's own perspective.

*World Stages, Local Audiences* is comprised of five lengthy essays, four addressing queer performance and all touching upon Canadian national identity and politics. Writing from a personal perspective, Dickinson's voice is present throughout, offering his own reactions to the topics and events he discusses. In this way, Dickinson practices Peggy Phelan's notion of "performative writing"—a practice that seeks to counter dry recollections of art events that simply recount facts about them by drawing instead from the writer's own experience in order to elicit a similar response from the reader. Through this practice, Dickinson, like Phelan, seems to want to make scholarship a more fully creative endeavor, rather than an act of recording and analysis.

Dickinson is also concerned with countering the academic impulse to isolate and abstract phenomena from their contexts of reception. By contrast, he seeks to bring audience members' locale, socioeconomic status, sexual and national identities, and vocation into his discussions of the artworks they encounter, along with their previous experiences of art and their familiarity with cultures other than their own. Here, Dickinson draws on Jill Dolan's work, in particular *Geographies of Learning* (2001) and *Utopia in Performance* (2005), to address the divisions among audience, artist, and scholar, and to examine how audience members experience live performance and one another during art events. As his engagement with Dolan's scholarship suggests, Dickinson is interested in examining the ways in which an audience member's perspectives can shift during a live performance event, and how such shifting perspectives can open up possibilities for social change.

The first essay—the strongest in the collection—compares the Olympic-bid process and the run-up to the Games in both Vancouver and Beijing. In this analysis, Dickinson's probing curiosity ranges from exploring urban development in depressed areas of each city to analyzing the ways by which each government orchestrated public pageants of culture and art to reinforce its political views. Examining works by such artists as Ai Weiwei, Théâtre la seizième, Ruby Slippers Theatre, and David Rokeby, he also looks at the ways in which a "nationality"

is imposed on locals (including artists operating in their home countries), and how that nationality is interpreted by international viewers and visitors.

The second essay investigates same-sex marriage in recent performance works by Canadian, British, and US artists like Tim Miller, Charles Mee, Cheek by Jowl, and Annie Sprinkle, considering whether these queer appropriations of the marriage ritual reject marriage as an exclusively heterosexual practice or endorse a more expansive definition of marriage that includes queer practices. In this chapter, Dickinson identifies the social and political landscape as his "locale," mapping the peaks and valleys of public and legislative opinions on same-sex marriage, as well as the fault line separating the Anglican Church and its homosexual leaders, in order to define the field of these performers' works and their reception.

The third essay demonstrates some of the weaknesses of Dickinson's gyroscopic writing. Here, he follows three parallel tracks: Tony Kushner's play *Homebody/Kabul* as produced in multiple countries; Dickinson's own travels to witness performances of Kushner's work; and the itinerant, international career of professional soccer player David Beckham. While intriguing at times, the associative meanderings of this essay are frustrating, especially as Dickinson fails to draw any strong conclusions. Missing, for example, is the link among the nomadic careers of Kushner, Beckham, and Dickinson himself; missing also is a consideration of how a global career has affected Kushner's writing. While Dickinson does provide a detailed discussion of the variations in *Homebody/Kabul* as it travels across continents, he misses the opportunity to interrogate Kushner's international, nomadic career in terms of the parallels he sets up with his own career and with Beckham's.

The fourth essay returns to the United States and Canada to address reactions by artists and the public alike to news of the deaths of queer individuals, especially deaths that were the result of AIDS or sexuality-based hate crimes. Dickinson examines here the work of Terrence McNally, Rebecca Belmore, Margie Gillis, and Paula Vogel, among others. His interest in this chapter lies in certain forms of public remembrance that different audiences engage in (for example, performances and memorials), and in how such remembrances often reveal conflicting desires to both erase and shine light on queer individuals and communities.

The final essay focuses on environmental disaster and the environmental impact of live performance practice. Reflecting back on some of the artists discussed earlier in the book, Dickinson also considers Paul Chan's production of *Waiting for Godot* in post-Katrina New Orleans and an interactive

performance by the Vancouver-based Headlines Theatre. Provocatively, he expands his definition of performance to include environmental changes, particularly extreme weather events linked to global warming like the 2006 storm that leveled much of Vancouver's famous Stanley Park.

Wide in scope and roving in style, *World Stages, Local Audiences* offers readers a rich investigation of the complex and shifting relationships among performance, place, and audience. Although Dickinson's writing is at times unfocused and overly complicated, it nonetheless outlines an ambitious project that ultimately raises important philosophical questions about the situatedness of meaning, opening up new avenues for future research and discussion.

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**CONTESTING PERFORMANCE: GLOBAL SITES OF RESEARCH.** Edited by Jon McKenzie, Heike Roms, and C. J. W.-L. Wee. Performance Interventions series. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; pp. 256.

As its title suggests, Jon McKenzie, Heike Roms, and C. J. W.-L. Wee's edited collection invites us to "contest" a monolithic definition of performance studies, looking to "global sites of research" for alternatives to Richard Schechner's approach to performance studies (US PS). The editors argue that, while Schechner's broad-spectrum approach includes the entire globe, it is not the only approach from the entire globe, and to assume that it is promotes intellectual hegemony and cultural imperialism. To be clear, this book is not a critique of Schechner's approach, but, rather, of the central place this approach has assumed in academies worldwide. The volume is divided into three sections, each with contributions from an international mix of scholars: the essays in the first section offer historical overviews of the contested terrain the study of performance occupies within the context of the academy; those in the second section provide accounts of contestations of US PS offered by research sites outside of the academy; and those in the third section outline case studies of alternative methodologies generated by and applied to the study of indigenous performance traditions from diverse locations around the globe. Taken together, the essays question a monolithic definition of performance; query the relationship of performance studies to practice; consider the place of the participant-observer in the study of performance; insist on the necessity of considering

indigenous understandings of performance when constructing theories of performance, rather than simply incorporating indigenous examples into the hegemony of US PS; and trace the development of performance studies over time. The editors identify the stakes of this contestation as academic, but also, more importantly, as social and political, given the influence of performance studies upon its objects of analysis. As they aver, a truly global understanding of performance studies promises to generate new ways of understanding cosmopolitanism, locality, and interculturalism.

The chapters in the first third of the book follow a consistent pattern: an institutional history; an explanation of the issues raised by this history (often relative to US PS); and an implied or briefly stated argument about this material. Diana Taylor, for example, traces the origins of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics at New York University, noting how it has dealt with intractable issues of translation, access to performance, and technological mediation. She argues that these issues are precisely what gives performance studies its value. For her part, Gay McAuley maintains that Australian PS corrects for the US PS's aversion to theatre, while Heike Roms offers a historical account of performance studies in the UK that highlights the artificiality of the researcher/practitioner divide. In her discussion of Northwestern University's oral interpretation approach to PS, Shannon Jackson points to the political ramifications of treating everyday narratives as performance. Uchino Tadashi and Takahashi Yuichiro provocatively contrast the narrow nationalism of Japanese tertiary education with the perceived openness of US PS's international approach.

The second section moves from the history of the academy to histories of nonacademic sites of performance studies, such as an arts journal, an artistic collaboration, and intersections between political activists and artists. The issue of individual and national identity provides a politically charged through-line and a contrast to the poststructuralist concerns of US PS. Three essays conclude with a call for analyzing the evolving relationship between research and performance: Sibylle Peters offers a typology of German PS, suggesting a direct connection between it and German artistic production; Lada Čale Feldman and Marin Blažević explore Croatian PS through the lens of translation and speech act theory; and Bojana Kunst documents the evolution of a Slovenian arts journal. In one of the best pieces in the volume, Ray Langenbach and Paul Rae argue for a closer connection among artistic production, performance studies, and local theorizations of performance. In applying their method to Singapore, they invert the traditional relationship between