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***Institutional Theatrics: Performing Arts Policy in Post-Wall Berlin.***

By Brandon Woolf. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2021. Pp. 280 + 23 illus. £89.95/\$90.96 Hb; £35/\$35 Pb.

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*Institutional Theatrics* makes a precious contribution to research about post-wall Berlin theatre and to an analysis of arts policy. Policy remains a minority concern in anglophone theatre scholarship despite the very valuable work produced in recent decades by a range of scholars including UK-based Joshua Edelman, Stephen Greer, Jen Harvie, Baz Kershaw and Lourdes Orozco. Nevertheless, scholars interested in socially engaged theatre as well as theatre and politics will find much food for thought in Brandon Woolf's discussion of 'performance as policy' (p. 19). Influenced by Theodor Adorno but also by the policy and performance theories of George Yúdice, Toby Miller, Judith Butler and Shannon Jackson, Woolf forges this fruitful concept to grasp how infrastructural conditions determine theatre practices and, conversely, how the latter also contribute to reproducing and transforming a cultural landscape subject to chronic restructuring and fiscal retrenchment.

This approach is put to work most directly in Woolf's introductory discussion of the protests surrounding Chris Dercon's controversial tenure as head of the Volksbühne theatre, but also in Chapter 1 where Woolf discusses the equally contested demise of the Schiller Theatre in 1993. These chapters offer valuable insights into how cultural producers and their constituencies mobilize to performatively contest (successfully in the Volksbühne case) governmental decisions. An analysis of how actual works interact with policy agendas is found in Chapter 3, which, like the first chapter, brings historical depth to the analysis while shifting it towards an examination of independent (but still state-funded) theatre projects in Berlin's so-called 'free scene' (p. 101). The focus here is a project called *Volkspalast* (2004), which refunctioned the building that had served as the seat of the parliament of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) before its controversial transformation into a cultural complex including a museum, which would partly erase this socialist history. Volkspalast countered the restorative nostalgia of both those supporting and those opposing the transformation of this landmark building through a series of cultural events featuring performance projects playfully interrogating the public function of such spaces in post-wall Berlin. Chapters 2 and 4 have a more indirect relation to policy as Woolf discusses performances alongside the cultural leadership of theatre directors and producers. However, through rich analyses of a Frank Castorf staging of Bertold Brecht's Baden-Baden *Lehrstück* (2010) and andcompany&Co.'s (*Coming*) *Insurrection* (2013), the author provides detailed accounts of the distinct culture fostered by Castorf and his collaborators at the Volksbühne as well as of debates and campaigns relating to the infrastructural problems (cuts and precarity, among others) of the 'free scene' after the 2007–8 economic crash. Like Chapter 3, the inclusion of the significant but under-discussed andcompany&Co. will broaden anglophone perspectives on German theatre.

On the whole, Woolf paints a sympathetic portrait of Berlin's contemporary theatre-makers, producers and allied politicians who, at best, are presented as the 'good guy[s]' and 'hard-core freak[s]' making the 'craziest ideas' happen (p. 118). However, beyond fetishizing and romanticizing some of these cultural figures, the analysis tends to blur distinctions between policy and management and, by extension, policy and culture on account of the influence of Yúdice's managerial conception of politics and culture. As a result, Woolf's sophisticated analysis can fall prey to a form of cultural-managerial voluntarism which undermines the critical currents of his prose. While leaders and collectives can effect institutional change and

influence policy makers, claims to agency are sometimes overinflated or become synonymous with expedient (but hardly transformative) pragmatism. For example, according to Woolf, the famously edgy culture of the Volksbühne under Castorf, which the latter and Woolf himself tend to present as politically subversive, was enabled by the state's decision not to cut the theatre's funding, i.e. to maintain the (desirable) status quo. By contrast, in the case of the Schiller theatre, Woolf seems to suggest that a management-led restructuring, job cuts and all, rather than the theatre's complete closure would have spurred a desired institutional transformation. The value of a piece of scholarship lies also in the contradictions, silences and disavowals that open a space for interested readers to think and question. Woolf's generous and well-researched book does just this and will remain required reading for anyone interested in contemporary German theatre, socially engaged performance and arts policy.

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***International Theatre Festivals and 21st-Century Interculturalism.***

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*International Theatre Festivals and 21st-Century Interculturalism* interrogates the structures and practices of a wide range of international theatre, performance and live-arts festivals from around the globe; identifies current trends in festival programming and curation; and evaluates different models for enabling meaningful intercultural exchange. Throughout this monograph, Knowles calls for a new festival paradigm that is decolonial, accessible and participatory, and that 'contribute[s] to the formation and transformation of newly intercultural communities across acknowledged and celebrated differences' (p. 7).

This study, positioned at the intersection of the subfields of new interculturalism and festival studies, brings Knowles's prior work in both fields to bear on a rigorous, materialist critique of the 'politics and practices of festivals in the first two decades of the twenty-first century' in relation to how they 'stage, represent, exchange, market, and negotiate cultural difference' (p. 17). It furthers Knowles's cultural-materialist methodology for festival studies – developed over the past two decades – that also involves participant observation to consider the audience's intercultural experience as located within the 'push, pull, and tension between individual shows and between each show and the festival' as a meta-event, or frame (p. 8).

Grouped by festival types that provide the chapter structure, Knowles examines Indigenous, destination, curated live-arts, fringe and alternative, and intracultural transnational festivals in turn. To disrupt established festival epistemologies and decentre colonialist perspectives, he proposes relocating festival origins from the 'competitive framework of ancient Greece' to the 'relational frameworks' of 'ancient and contemporary trans-Indigenous negotiation and exchange' (pp. 30–1, original emphasis). Thus the Indigenous festivals considered in the first chapter – such as the Festival Internacional de la Cultura Maya (Yucatán, Mexico), Garma Festival of Traditional Cultures (north-east Arnhem Land, Australia), and the Merrie Monarch Festival (Hawaii, USA) – provide models by which to assess how other types of festival 'have enabled, enhanced, restricted, or resisted their potential to broker cultural exchange' (p. 18).

Shifts within the festival landscape in response to changing socio-economic and political circumstances are evident across each of the categories. Where once elite international arts festivals were motivated by the restoration of European high culture and international