

## REVIEWS

REVIEW EDITOR: KATE DONELAN  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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**O'Toole, J. (2006). (And the Drama Australia research community).  
*Doing Drama Research: Stepping into enquiry in drama, theatre and education*  
Qld: Drama Australia  
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John Hughes and Kirsty McGeoch  
University of Sydney

This is a remarkable research book because O'Toole has assembled a stellar cast of contributors who, in the finest traditions of the performing arts, have collaborated, rehearsed and finally mounted an exemplary research production; and all, as O'Toole the Director says, 'with no thought of reward or recognition'. The theatre metaphor is apt. The book provides an introduction to the field of enquiry and research and is divided into two sections: Part A, Chapters 1-5: *Thinking Research*, which covers conceptual and generic research concerns and Part B, Chapters 6-10: *Doing Research*, which details the strategies and practical steps for undertaking research.

O'Toole's preface is noteworthy as it sagely positions drama and theatre education research in the Australian context. O'Toole salutes the unity of Australian drama teachers and researchers and outlines where the community has come from and the speed with which practitioners have developed into researchers capable of making significant contributions, especially but not exclusively, in the field of transformative research. The preface is not only an informative analysis of the development of drama research in Australia but is an excellent and succinct historical account of drama in Australian education.

Part A not only conceptualises the various research paradigms available to researchers and outlines the basic principles of research but enthusiastically engages the reader in the joy of discovery.

As Chapter 1 enthusiastically states:

We are all driven by curiosity and, as theatre workers and perhaps educators, we are also usually driven by a passion for our calling that gives us a powerful desire to know, deeply, more about how it works, why we do it and what effects it might have, per se . . . (Chapter 1:13)

Chapter 2: *What Does Research Entail?* examines the history of research, including Ancient Greek, Muslim and Western traditions. The chapter succinctly explores the philosophical underpinnings of ethically based enquiry.

Chapter 3: *Research, Teaching and Art-Making* explores the innovative and exciting links between art-making, reflective praxis and new approaches such as narrative enquiry.

Chapter 4: *Approaches and Definitions* has two foci. The first is an examination of useful approaches for drama research including descriptive and interpretive research, the interventionist model and phenomenological paradigms. The second focus is on a brave and clever attempt at defining key terms in research for the beginning researcher. However, experienced researchers and supervisors of research will also find this section particularly useful.

Chapter 5: *Methodologies and Methods* brilliantly describes and gives examples of the most common methodologies in arts research — ethnography, case studies, historical research, grounded theory, action research, experimental research, design-based research, reflective practitioner research, arts-based and arts-informed enquiry (and its relations). The chapter demystifies the various journeys while encouraging wider reading.

Part B, presents a practical handbook which systematically walks the reader through the different stages of research.

Chapter 6 takes us on the first step of bringing the research topic into clear focus. O'Toole gives advice as to how to move from a general, often sweeping topic to formulating a strong central research question, one which will keep the researcher from veering off onto other tangents. The chapter further deals with determining an appropriate methodology, and guidelines are then clearly and systematically mapped out for how to develop a research proposal and prepare a successful ethics approval application, including a very useful model of a participant consent form (on page 79).

In Chapter 7, O'Toole discusses the literature review, from its importance at the outset in previewing the existing terrain before embarking on a project, to presenting an intelligent and critical report of it by the end of the inquiry. The recommendations on how to start the process, 'read' the literature and how to retrieve and document it should be mandatory reading for any beginning researcher. Penny Bundy's ideas for getting started with literature (page 85), and Janet McDonald's checklist for cataloguing literature (page 89) are particularly helpful.

Chapter 8 gives attention to data collection and generation. The importance of negative data which may challenge or contradict our hypotheses and the forms these might take are also highlighted. O'Toole then discusses data generated by the researcher, as in journals, field notes and reflective memos, before examining the different types of participant data. He gives particular treatment to the processes of interviewing and surveying and their attendant considerations. The chapter ends with 'Statistics for the faint-hearted' — a thumbnail sketch of using statistics which makes the prospect less intimidating. The chapter highlights how they could be used to enhance drama research.

Chapter 9 begins with preparing the ground, or rather the boat, for data analysis. O'Toole uses Madonna Stinson's metaphor for data analysis, of the fishing vessel floating on the surface of the data, slowly trawling down to the ocean floor, asking the research questions and deepening levels of sub-questions until the big unknown fish is finally caught. The chapter goes on to discuss analysis at different stages of the process of data collection, and then takes the reader by the hand to walk through quantitative analysis (again in a non-daunting way), qualitative analysis and analysis using software tools. The end of the

chapter looks at how to synthesize the data and then check it against the existing literature to tease out new knowledge. How this might look is described by a beginning researcher, Anna Plunket (page 150).

The final chapter looks at how to report research findings. Especially useful for beginning researchers is the standard thesis format (page 155). O'Toole gives a comprehensive list of reporting style pointers to enhance the readability of our findings and then discusses issues surrounding the publication of research. Aware that some readers may by this point feel slightly intimidated or overwhelmed by the logistics of research, O'Toole, with the help of D.H. Lawrence, returns to the metaphor of the boat to reignite the readers' sense of excitement in their proposed voyage of enquiry and encourage us to set sail into the uncharted waters.

It is rare to find such information so clearly, concisely and accessibly presented in one single volume. In terms of clarity, the layout is easy to follow and we particularly liked the open left-hand margin where the key ideas of each paragraph are noted for quick reference. Refreshingly, this book doesn't assume any prior knowledge of the enquiry process. Rather, it operates like a primer, giving the reader the basic principles of research in a concise and unpretentious way. The language of the text is also highly accessible and O'Toole's wit and turn of phrase make it a pleasure to read. Not only does he break down the academic jargon, but his use of metaphor and examples also gives the reader entry points into material that might otherwise be dry or difficult to penetrate. *Doing Drama Research* is an excellent resource. Not only should it find its way onto the bookshelves of all drama researchers and teachers but it should be compulsory reading for any beginning researcher in the social sciences.

**Terence Crawford (2005)**  
***Trade Secrets, Australian Actors and Their Craft***  
**Currency Press, NSW.**  
**ISBN 0 86819 763 7**

Richard Sallis  
University of Melbourne

The idea behind *Trade Secrets* is not entirely new. There have been many anthologies on acting where actors are either interviewed or write about their own work. However it is long overdue for a text featuring Australian actors to be published. Terence Crawford's book ably fills this gap. In his introduction to this collection of interviews with fourteen Australian actors, Crawford explains his reasons for writing it and in doing so he echoes the thoughts of many of those who are interested in the art of acting. Crawford explains how at times, when watching a play, he wonders what process an actor has gone through to create her/his character. Does the actor subscribe to the teachings of a particular 'guru' or does she/he draw more from their life experiences, or both, or something else altogether? As he notes, one of the benefits of this book is that Australian readers can read what an actor reveals about his/her work and then go to the theatre to see the actor at work (something that can rarely happen when Australians read similar books containing the thoughts of British, American or other overseas actors).

In his introduction, Crawford is forthright and dogmatic in his views about what acting is and isn't, the ills of actor-training institutions and the plight of the theatre industry in this country. Crawford's opinions in this section seem somewhat out of place because they draw attention away from the actors on whose interviews the majority of the book is based. Interestingly, some of Crawford's views are in one way or another contradicted by those he interviews. I am sure he is not too perturbed by this, however, because he acknowledges that acting is a matter of personal taste and there is no one acting process that is necessarily any better than another. Fortunately Crawford has not compiled the collection as a course on acting, and the text is the better for this decision. It provides instead an interesting set of insights into how a particular group of Australian actors describe what works for *them*.

The range of actors Crawford interviews for this collection is varied and in a way it is the breadth of their experiences that makes the text so appealing. From his enthusiastic interviewing style, it is evident that Crawford thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity provided by the publishers, Currency Press. Apparently the author drew up a 'shortlist' of 113 actors and then set about whittling it down to those whom he most wanted to interview. According to him some were not available or not interested. The fourteen actors that he ended up interviewing come from diverse backgrounds and are at different stages in their career. Crawford acknowledges that, while their varied experience extends outside the confines of traditional theatre to film, television and sketch comedy, they represent the middle ground of acting in Australia. This decision is understandable from a marketing perspective, if a little safe. However, there is certainly diversity across the range of interviewees. There is Paula Arundell, who graduated from NIDA in the early 1990s and is now an 'up and coming' actor. At the other end of the scale is Bud Tingwell now in his mid-eighties. Bud has seemingly done everything an actor might want to do but the interview reveals that he is still trying out new ideas and looking forward to his next acting engagement.

From the edited interview transcripts that comprise the bulk of the book, Crawford often lets the actors speak for themselves. He intuitively picks up on what his subjects are saying and has the knack of drawing out more perhaps than they would otherwise have offered. It may be due to Crawford's astute editing, but for the most part the actors come across as eloquent, knowledgeable and engaging. Some tend to reminisce and provide one anecdote after another, but I didn't mind this at all. A great appeal of this book is that Crawford allows the actors to set their own agenda and as such they are not constricted by any other purpose; they are not trying to sell their next film, nor is the interview shaped to fit the niche demographic of a particular publication. Crawford encourages the actors to espouse their ideas and opinions on acting in the way that suits them best.

I found many points of interest with what the actors revealed in their interviews. Every reader will similarly find his/her own as well. However overall I found the interview with Geoffrey Rush to be the standout. Crawford gives his interviewee centre stage, yet manages to skilfully steer the interview so the reader is treated to Rush's entertaining stories on many aspects of his accomplished theatre and film career; from semi-professional travelling theatre shows in regional Queensland to many of his notable film roles including those in *Shine*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Elizabeth*, *Lantana*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*. Through a series of anecdotes Rush's passion for, and commitment to, acting comes to the fore.

The only weak spot in this otherwise commendable collection is Crawford's concluding chapter. In it he picks up where he left off in his 'introduction' and espouses his own theories of acting. In doing so he draws on some of what the actors have said in their interviews. This section has the potential to spoil the reader's enjoyment of the text. It is a pity Crawford could not let the views and experiences of the actors stand on their own without feeling the need to analyse and evaluate them in this way.

Crawford introduces his collection by stating that 'the actors' responses are subjective, humble, often uncertain, often unconscious of theoretical foundations, honest, sometimes unreasoned, sometimes unsatisfactory, sometimes contradictory, frequently inspiring' (p. 5). This encapsulates my own reaction to the book entirely, and it is what I enjoyed most about it. It provides a rare glimpse into some of our most notable Australian working actors, by giving them the opportunity to describe what they do in their own words.

**Phillip B. Zarrilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams  
and Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei. (2006)**  
*Theatre Histories: An Introduction*  
Routledge; New York, USA and Oxon, UK  
ISBN10: 0-415-22727-5 (hbk)  
ISBN10: 0-415-22728-3 (pbk)

Angela O'Brien  
The University of Melbourne

Routledge's most recent theatre history text, *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, makes a number of claims through which it differentiates itself from and 'challenges the standard format from (other) one-volume theatre history texts'. The most significant of these is a global perspective, which allows for an exploration of aesthetic and interpretive approaches from many 'cultures, continents and time-frames' including, among many others, early Celtic ritual, contemporary Japanese theatre, Indian kathakali, ancient Greek theatre, the imperial theatre of China and the Italian Commedia dell'Arte. The second distinguishing feature is the synthesis of traditional theatre history with a range of contemporary methodologies from cultural studies, critical theory and performance studies. The authors assume an inclusive definition of theatre and performance, including both non-text and text-based forms, ritual and civic festivals and hybrid forms, tourism and the performance of the everyday. The use of multiple narratives and multiple perspectives ensures that this text has a very contemporary feel, with more than half of the book focused on modern and post-modern performance, making it relevant for twenty-first century students.

This eclectic approach has been possible because of the broad and complementary strengths of the four authors. Gary Jay Williams, the General Editor, and now Professor Emeritus at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., was a professional New York critic and actor and formerly the editor of *Theatre Survey*, the journal of the American Society for Theatre Research and is best known for his work on Shakespeare; Phillip Zarrilli (University of Exeter) is a specialist on Indian theatre and actor training; Carrol Sorgenfrei (U.C.L.A) is a scholar, translator and playwright focusing on Japanese, intercultural and fusion theatre; Bruce McConachie (University of Pittsburgh) has published widely in the areas of American theatre and performance, and cognitive studies.

As well as offering a global perspective, the authors aim to show how 'key developments in the history of performance are related to the key developments in modes of human communication that have reshaped human perception' and to challenge readers to approach the history of theatre and performance 'actively and critically'. The authors argue that the book avoids some of the limitations of western humanism by focusing on cultural performances rather than theatre. They describe cultural performances as 'expressive events' with three characteristics: specific spatio-temporal frames; identifiable structures with rules, conventions and/or techniques; and content which allows the spectators to reflect upon the ideas, meanings and experiences of the performance. In their introduction, the authors interrogate the task of the historian, recognising the pitfalls associated with a positivist approach to reading source material as well as the importance of discussing non-western genres in culturally appropriate terms. The authors recognise that theatre and performance are 'complex, culturally embedded, historically specific kinds of communal reflections and communications'. As a consequence, they have organised the material into four sections, each of which is intended to mark a key shift in human communication and thought. Each part is further divided into chapters, supported by performance case studies, generally drawn from different cultures; each case study is analysed through a selected interpretive approach which is introduced to the reader as part of the case study. While this approach is methodologically and culturally broad ranging, the sequencing of the book remains largely chronological, although often an analysis of contemporary practice is used to illustrate oral traditions where there is minimal reliable documentary evidence.

Part 1, edited by Phillip Zarrilli, *Performance and theatre in oral and written cultures before 1600*, is framed by an essay on the evolution of human speech and language and the emergence of writing. Chapter 1, *Oral, ritual and shamanic performance* draws from the theories of Richard Schechner and Victor Turner. The two featured case studies, Yoruba ritual (West Africa) and Korean shamanism, are interpreted respectively through theories of play and improvisation and speech act theory. Chapter 2, *Religious and civic festivals: Early drama and theatre in context*, is relatively chronological in approach and offers case studies on the classical Greek play *Oedipus* and a medieval Spanish play form which features symbolic fights between Christians and Moors. Chapter 3, *Imperial theatre: Pleasure, power and aesthetics*, analyses traditional theatre forms and genres alongside literary reflections on the artistry and conventions associated with these forms. Greek comedy, Indian Sanskrit theatre and Japanese Noh are analysed through, respectively, Henri Bergson's theory of laughter, reception theory and feminist and gender theory.

Part 2, edited by Bruce McConachie, looks at the impact of the printing press and the rise and institutionalisation of professional theatre in Europe from the Renaissance through to the end of the eighteenth century. This section focuses on the role of print culture in creating, sustaining and legitimising a bourgeois public consciousness and the ways in which dramatic literature and text-based theatre contributed to this. The first chapter in this section covers state patronage of theatre in the seventeenth century, exemplified by the courts of Louis XIV of France, Elizabeth I of England and the Tokugawa shogunate in Japan, with case studies on Molière, Japanese kabuki and bunraku and Shakespeare's play, *Twelfth Night*. Chapter 5 looks at the eighteenth century and the development of a popular and sentimental theatre that responded to the morality and feelings of the emerging middle class, and the further popularisation of theatre in the nineteenth century with the

emergence of melodrama and theatrical spectacle. Case studies of the English actor-manager David Garrick and the popular form of melodrama are juxtaposed with an analysis of the popular Indian dance-drama form, kathakali, which is discussed using an ethnographic interpretive approach. Chapter 6 focuses on romanticism, nationalism and imperialism on the European, Russian and North American stages in the nineteenth century, with a case study on Irish playwright Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* and the nationalist riots it provoked.

Part 3, edited by Bruce McConachie, focuses on the rise of realism and the popular and aesthetic reactions against illusionist theatre in the twentieth century. Chapter 7 introduces early twentieth century popular entertainment. The case study on 'blackface' performance in the United States of America applies the theoretical perspectives of Fredric Jameson who argues that many forms of popular culture simultaneously inspire social change while they reinforce the status quo. A second case study on British pantomime employs a phenomenological approach to theatre analysis. Chapter 8 analyses theatrical modernism and avant-garde theatre in Russia, the United States, Europe and Southeast Asia, including surrealism, expressionism, social realism and the 'theatre of the absurd'. Actor training in the Western theatre is discussed through a juxtaposition of the psychological and the sociological modes established by Stanislavski and Meyerhold respectively. Chapter 9 examines the political culture of modern theatre from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s, through a discussion of political orientation in the theatre and 'the different responses of the stage to the problems of the individual in modern society'. This chapter includes a case study on the use of social drama in Kerala, India, juxtaposed with studies of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Brecht's *Mother Courage*. Readers are introduced to the interpretive approaches of politics and performance, cultural materialism and semiotics.

Part 4 focuses on the period from the mid-twentieth century to the present and analyses theatre and performance in the age of global communications. This section considers a range of disparate and post-modern forms including mediatised theatre, performance art, postcolonial theatre, radical theatre and community based theatre, the 'mega-musical', intercultural theatre, international festivals and tourism and performance. A number of key contemporary directors and companies are introduced including Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Robert Wilson, Roger Planchon, Suzuki Tadashi, PETA and the Wooster Group. The essays in this section are provocative, particularly the discussions on the impact of globalisation in polarising theatre to rich and poor extremes, global Shakespeare and cultural adaptation and the ethics of intercultural performance. New theoretical approaches are introduced including deconstruction, post-colonialism, the theory of national identity and everyday performance.

*Theatre Histories: An Introduction* is an impressive and ambitious text. The authors achieve their objective of offering a global perspective on drama, theatre and performance, although to my mind the book remains very Western in perspective. The brief introductions of a diverse range of methodologies employed by theatre historians and performance scholars and their application to the case studies is very useful to teachers and students, although there is very minimal representation from non-Western theorists. On the other hand, the case studies include many examples from non-Western theatre. There is a good balance between text-based and non-text based performance examples and the authors manage to cover a surprisingly broad range of playwrights, directors, theatre forms and theorists. The book offers an introduction to most of the seminal texts included in any

survey theatre studies course. This is a very contemporary theatre history text and the synthesis of traditional history scholarship with performance studies is a significant development. The contemporary global perspective ensures relevancy for students steeped in popular culture.

This is an invaluable reference text for drama and theatres studies at secondary and tertiary levels, particularly years 11, 12 and 13. It provides an excellent resource for teachers as the case studies and the examples of interpretive approaches are discrete and could be used as the basis for a one-off class session or seminar discussion. I would certainly consider using this as basic text for a year 12 or first year tertiary course. It is highly recommended for school and university libraries and as a great resource for drama and theatre studies teachers and lecturers who are working with middle school through to tertiary students.