

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.

By Ric Knowles. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xvi + 313.

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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

diplomacy, they have become enmeshed within processes of festivalization, eventification and city branding that promote a 'universalist mantra of "excellence"' to attract tourism (p. 233). Fringe festivals, too, particularly those that are open-access, operate as neo-liberal free marketplaces that are ultimately normative rather than the accessible and radically democratic spaces they purport to be. This leads Knowles to seek alternative models such as the 'second-wave' curated live-arts festival, identified by Keren Zaiontz, or the broad category of 'intracultural transnational festivals' that support specific transnational communities, including those defined by language groups.

Through a deep level of engagement with a wide range of international festivals, Knowles identifies and critiques how festivals are evolving in response to the 'politics of cultural inclusion, exclusion, and representation' (p. 17). By reading across organizational structures, event types, and local conditions, he synthesizes wise practices and recommendations for how festivals can better 'serve as spaces of intercultural negotiation and exchange' within the Conclusion (p. 231). For example, he counsels that beyond the curation of good shows, preferably from beyond the international festival circuit, festivals should stage 'dialogue among interesting and provocative artists, local and international', who 'challenge one another and challenge audiences', possibly through ancillary events (p. 238). Not all festival organizing bodies will be driven by social-justice concerns or will be able to free themselves from the festivalization imperatives set by public funders and private investors. For those who do, and for researchers seeking to contextualize and assess such developments, this is a valuable resource and guide for how to remake the festival model on more equitable and sustainable grounds.

The writing of this book was finalized at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has provided a mandatory and unexpected pause for live-performance festivals to reflect on future directions and reassess the neo-liberal drive towards greater festivalization. Capitalizing on this moment, *International Theatre Festivals* comes at a critical time to aid the re-examination and interrogation of how international festivals can better 'serve as spaces for intercultural negotiation and exchange' (p. 231) into the future.