Book Reviews

Sightlines: Race, Gender and Nation in Contemporary Australian Theatre by Helen Gilbert. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998. ISBN 0-472-06677-3.

One night during an outdoor performance of the Aboriginal play *Wahngin Country* (Gilbert, 59-60), an extremely drunk university student stumbled into the solo performance of actor Stephen Albert. Albert deftly responded to the intrusion with some wry humor and then waited for him to exit the scene. The audience laughed with relief that the incident had been handled so lightly and perhaps with some regretful thoughts for the student meandering into the darkness. The final scene of this same play showed the homeless character looking for a place to sleep and in doing so, struggling to find enough twigs in the manicured setting of a park to light a fire. Both these performative moments were, for me, indicative of the difficulty in comparing Aboriginal and white Australian reality. In the first event, the bemusement at the young drunk and its deferential treatment would have not met the same reception if the roles had been reversed since alcoholism is coded in one way for Aboriginals and in another for whites. In the second scene, the spatial design of the park, as managed recreation for urban culture, could only barely provide comfort for a nomadic person in spite of the fact that all the land, the park and everywhere else in this island-continent, belongs after all to Aboriginal people. In Gilbert's study of contemporary Australian theatre, these hybrid realities, and the heterotopic spaces they generate, are the substance of her postcolonial analysis, an analysis that inserts the problematic nature of power, imperial and neoimperial, into the framework of dramatic criticism.

From the perspective of Australian theatre studies, this book is therefore essential reading. As a country that has continued to be obsessed by its identity "who and what are Australians," (4) and whose most recent dramatic pinnacle was the assertive nationalism of the nineteen seventies post-Vietnam dramatists, a revisionist historical approach is long overdue. Australia today is a multicultural nation of many unstable identities therefore its cultural expression must refract competing and changing beliefs about past and present realities. According to Gilbert, this history is a site of anxieties which recur in the ongoing debates about Australia becoming a republic, in the remembrance of its colonial past, in its failure to redress Aboriginal dispossession and in its ambivalence towards Asia. This study renegotiates these thematics of nation, the narratives and myths of Australia, by considering the discursive construction of historical consciousness in contemporary theatre. But history here is not only the operation of hegemonies and ideologies since it is produced and constructed through the experience of the peoples who live it, therefore any renegotiation of the effects of history must be subjective as well as critically deconstructive. While postcolonial criticism has made its project the decolonization of textual power "legal, literary, political, administra-

tive etc." the mechanisms for the articulation and analysis of subjectivity have been given far less attention. It is Gilbert's contribution to postcolonial studies to suggest that theatre, and not just dramatic writing but particularly performance, is one of the best means for understanding the "constructing of the self in history" (5). Theatre because it is spatial, historical, corporeal and above all, metatheatrical is able to show how multiplicity and contingency are the condition of the nation and its plural selves, not its failure.

In *Sightlines* therefore, Gilbert's examination of specific texts reveals what she calls the "counter discourse of performance," (13) within certain categories of drama, Aboriginal theatre, settler/invader plays, feminist postcolonial drama and plays about neoimperialism. Performances are a way of tracing dominant discourses, interrogating their assumptions and of proposing alternatives from the position of the marginalized or colonized subject. Utilizing a detailed performance semiotics, Gilbert is vigorous in exposing theatrical performance to the blast of contemporary theory. For instance, when reading feminist postcolonial plays such as Alma de Groen's *The Rivers of China*, she enunciates the complex positioning of "women as both complicit with the project of imperialism as well as representative of the Other, in the patriarchal, imperial project" which has involved domination, invasion, silencing and raping of the feminine, whether it be landscapes, bodies or indigenous people. Or, on the other hand, she reminds the reader that texts which engage positively with gender and nation such as Hilary Bell's *Fortune* can still be problematic in their representation of race; evidence that the process of decolonization is always incomplete.

Not only does Gilbert draw upon an extensive range of theoretical approaches to illuminate her discussion, but she is constantly attentive to the nuances of Australian history. In the chapter on neoimperialism her reading of the ambivalent role war has played in constituting the national psyche was cogent and penetrating; that she links public hostility towards American imperialism, particularly cultural and economic, with a tacit approval of its strategic agenda to contain the spread of Asian communism and neutralize perceived threats to the integrity, of Westernized cultures in the region, explains much not only about Australia's recent ineffectiveness in Asia but also about the absence of this subject matter. American influence and Asian engagement is present in many Australian plays. Decolonization of our British past is subject matter for constant reappraisal and features prominently in many settler plays, whether it be Dorothy Hewett's *The Man from Mukinupin* or Louis Nowra's *Inside the Island* but more pervasive contemporary ideological structures, such as consumerism or tourism, are only just being examined theatrically. The comedy and caricature of Rob George's *Sandy Lee Live at Nui Dat* is now being replaced by plays such as Michael Gurr's *Sex Diary of an Infidel* which demonstrate how pronounced Australian cultural orientalism, actually is, and Gilbert points to the need for more research on the

destabilizing perspectives which can be produced by Asian/Australian relations in the theatre.

Gilbert's examples are wide-ranging, large and small-scale productions, mainstream and community theatre, and it is refreshing that she regards them within a continuum of postcolonial investigation. She is attentive to visual as well as linguistic signifiers in the texts and where possible she elaborates upon the processes of enactment and reenactment which have shaped their performance, but I would like to draw attention to two elements of that analysis which are unique in the Australian context to date. First, the discussion of orality, particularly in relation to Aboriginal speech, is a valuable contribution to debates about the enunciation of minority voices within dominant discursive structures. She argues that vernacular and silence are powerful communicative signifiers which disturb otherwise white narrative conventions in texts such as the highly popular musical *Bran Nue Dae.* In a related argument, Gilbert also considers the role of the body within performance, particularly when it is dancing. Instead of seeing dance as something which is either an interruption or support to textual meanings, she regards the dancing body as a signifer that carries cultural messages in and of itself. Dance has the advantage of not simply operating as a spectacle which carries physical and social codes, because dancing in a theatrical presentation can also powerfully resist the gaze of the spectator by reaffirming the experience of subjectivity for the dancer. Without reifying the prevalence of dance in Aboriginal theatre, Gilbert thus enters fearlessly into a complex debate about the inauthenticity of the body as racial signifier. As she argues, there is a quantum leap from potential to actual that can be made from watching the vibrancy of someone dancing because it can imply a political agency that helps to constitute the body's performative presence without recourse to an "authentic," precolonial identity (77).

Which brings me back to my introductory anecdote about the incommensurability of perspectives opened up by the performance of an Aboriginal play. Gilbert manages this often contentious issue within postcolonial studies, and certainly within the intercultural theatre project, by arguing that both Aboriginal and settler theatres are speaking to the process of decolonization from different perspectives but both enable audiences to recognize the discursive and subjective constructions which locate us within a dramatically realized history. For Gilbert, postcolonial criticism provides a partial and provisional framework for observing the sightlines, of this unfinished project for radicalizing theatrical signification. Perhaps it is a time lag but while her analysis is largely optimistic about the negotiations between these different versions of colonial experience, recent events in Australia that have polarized communities make me more pessimistic about the contribution Australian theatre has made to rethinking colonial relations. Nonetheless, Gilbert practices the advice of Helen Tiffin in using "cross-cultural humil-

ity and homework," (Gilbert, 9) in her book's achievement of rewriting contemporary Australian theatre history.

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Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History. A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook edited by Vicki K. Janik. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998. ISBN 0-313-29785-1.

Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History. A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook is a valuable but decidedly imperfect collection of essays from fifty-two contributors who attempt to connect an assortment of performers, writers, and characters from literature, theatre, and the electronic media to the traditions of the fool. In many ways, it is a useful addition to existing scholarship on the idea of the fool in many guises from his apparent origins in the ancient theatre to contemporary popular culture. At its most effective in the solid, if at times pedestrian, bibliographical aspects, the book's essays cover the waterfront in quality, with some successfully demonstrating the significance of its particular subject to the volume's over-arching topic, while others strain to tie in more questionable subjects.

In the well-written introduction to *Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History. A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, editor Vicki K. Janik attempts to do the impossible. She endeavors mightily to tie together the disparate collection of figures examined in the volume's essays, suggesting that the fool can be defined in four distinct categories: (1) the wise fool, (2) the dupe or victim, (3) the trickster or evildoer, or (4) the innocent or holy fool. Janik's stab at providing some boundaries means to be helpful in extending the boundaries of the fool beyond standard histories of the character that tend to focus on mostly pre-modern sources and almost exclusively within the confines of Western culture. This is admirable, but it opens the door to almost any comedic character or performer imaginable, some of whom may fit one or more of Janik's categories, but more likely do not truly belong within the scope of this study. For example, essays are included on Charlie Chaplin, W. C. Fields, Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers, the Three Stooges, and Woody Allen, who, one might be persuaded, definitely belong here, but others like Jack Benny, Lucille Ball, Burns and Allen, and Martha Raye seem to be more of a stretch. Similarly, does the movie character Forrest Gump really belong here at all? James M. O'Brien argues that Gump, both in the Robert Zemeckis film and in novelist Winston Groom's novel,

is a "conventional innocent fool" (227), but aside from describing the characteristics of Gump that connect him to this decidedly general definition, he fails to make a compelling case. Would a study of Pirandello's fool characters or, for that matter, Eduardo de Filippo's, which are not included here, not take obvious precedence? Questionable choices do not too seriously undermine this volume, but do become more disturbing when the reader realizes that many more important figures are passed over. For example, perhaps the definitive twentieth century fool, Dario Fo, is not included in a single essay (and is only mentioned in passing in one other entry). Fo, the recipient of the 1997 Nobel Prize for Literature, stands as an actor/playwright who is almost entirely unique in modern theatre in his representation of the tradition of the fool/jester, and, perhaps more interestingly, he represents the unresolvable tension between performance and traditional dramatic literature, a tension that emerged with great controversy at the time of his Nobel selection. Since the volume combines literary figures with the performer, Fo would provide the one outstanding image who might help define the parameters of this volume. It would be impossible to list at length the more egregious omissions from this volume (No Vsevolod Meyerhold? No Max Reinhardt? No Eugène Ionesco? No music hall? No San Francisco Mime Troupe? No Bread and Puppet Theatre? And few references to the fine arts despite the title of the book), but there are also strengths that emerge in well-written and valuable contributions on some well-chosen topics from Ellen Rosenberg on Native American tricksters, Carl Bryan Holmberg on the relationship of drag queens to the fool, Moira E. Casey on ways the Restoration "fops" might and might not belong in the realm of fooldom, Elizabeth Hoffman Nelson on Hopi clowns, C. Todd White on manifestations of the fool in camp, Carl Bryan Holmberg on Loki (the Norse fool), Joel Shatzky on fools in Yiddish literature and culture, Donald Perret on Samuel Beckett's postmodern clowns in *Waiting for Godot*, and, above all, Ron Jenkins' three essential essays on Penasar of Bali, Taishu Engeki, and South African political clowning. Janik would have done well to pay closer attention to Jenkins' previous studies, *Acrobats of the Soul* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988) and *Subversive Laughter* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), to guide the choice of international topics for this volume. Other useful scholarship on this topic can be found in Martin Green and John Swan's *The Triumph of Pierrot* (New York: Macmillan, 1986) and my own *The Theatre of Yesterday and Tomorrow: Commedia dell'arte on the Modern Stage* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), both of which point to a wider range of literary, artistic, and theatrical figures that belong to the traditions of the fool. Many of these subjects deserve more attention than they have received by scholars thus far, and *Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art and History. A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook* only scratches the surface.

On the positive side, there are also excellent contributions on a broad sampling of literary works. From Shakespeare, the characters of Touchstone, Puck,

Hamlet, Lear's Fool, Falstaff, and Feste are included in individual essays, and there are useful entries on Paul the Apostle, Plautus's clowns, Ben Jonson's characters, *commedia dell'arte*, circus clowns, Rigoletto, the fool in Aristophanes and Plato, Punch and Judy, Pierrot, Rabelais, the Tarot fool, the Vice character in Middle English Morality Plays, and, most interestingly, The Yankee character in an essay by Jack Hrkach that along with effectively connecting this early American character to the tradition of the fool, provides some welcome commentary on under-examined theatre and drama in the United States of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art, and History, A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook is handsomely bound in a heavy library binding, but suffers from a lack of illustrations for a subject that provides so much visual wonderment. Good bibliographies are included with each essay, as well as a longer general bibliography at the back of the volume. As a broad overview of a complex topic, this volume is a good introduction; serious students and scholars will only find it sporadically interesting and will yearn for a fuller examination of the rich history of the fool.

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Cultural Calisthenics. Writings on Race, Politics, and Theatre by Robert Brustein. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1998. ISBN 1-56663-220-X.

No theatrical practitioner will ever love a dramatic critic, so Robert Brustein must be quite a conflicted individual at home since he is, in fact, both an exemplary critic and a leading artist of the stage. Perhaps the tension this must certainly create within him is what makes him one of the most erudite and useful critics writing on theatre and drama (and occasionally film) today. Prior to *Cultural Calisthenics. Writings on Race, Politics, and Theatre*, Brustein's most recent collection of his criticism, *Reimagining American Theatre* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1992), was the most welcome volume on the quality, problems, and issues of contemporary theatrical production published within the last decade. The new collection, like Brustein's several earlier collections, follows a similar format in compiling his most recent writings. And, as its title suggests, Brustein's critical vision extends beyond the parochialism of the theatre community and incisively connects the dramatic work to the greater societal issues against which the drama is seen.

In attempting to dissect what makes Brustein such an effective critic—and, at the same time, to understand the role of the drama critic—it is perhaps too easy to point out that he is literate, cultured, and passionately concerned with the theatre as an art form. His writing is polished, economic, and free of the sort of academese and scholarly jargon that mars so much current criticism on theatre. All of this is plainly obvious. More significantly, along with Brustein's encyclopedic knowledge of theatre history and dramatic literature, he manages to bring his own vast experience as a director and theatre manager to his analysis of a wide range of plays and productions. Few high profile drama critics of the twentieth century have much if any practical experience in theatrical production—Harold Clurman may be Brustein's only real predecessor in so completely combining his roles as critic and artist. And like Clurman, Brustein is also a naturally gifted teacher; his criticisms, at their harshest, tend to suggest solutions to problems rather than falling into the lamentable habit of some of his contemporaries (most notoriously John Simon) of malicious personal attacks. When in praise of an outstanding work, Brustein pushes the reader to consider the questions the play raises, to seek the source of the aesthetic decisions of the production, and to look beyond the work to the important cultural concerns related to the play and its performance.

Following a general introduction, Brustein's writings are organized in four distinct parts. The first, titled "Positions: Race and Politics," features thirteen essays on topics as diverse as a proposal for the salvation of the National Endowment for the Arts, questions of cultural power and the decline of American culture in general, funding issues for professional theatres, and, perhaps most importantly, an essay called "Subsidized Separatism," in which he challenges August Wilson's explosive 1996 Theatre Communications Group keynote address in which Wilson, as Brustein reconstructs, suggested that black theatre "cannot be fully absorbed or understood by white people, much less criticized by them"(19). Brustein's response to Wilson's idea that "I stand myself and my art squarely on the self-defining ground of the slave quarters," is that those slave quarters have been razed and he wonders if the "grim uncompleted racial business" of America can be dealt with if there is no "statute of limitations on white guilt and white reparations"(24). It is impossible, and undoubtedly dangerous, to try to provide a necessarily brief overview of the debate the Wilson-Brustein battle has inspired, but whichever combatant you may support, it is obvious that there has not been as bracing an exchange on issues concerning American theatre in years. As Brustein himself points out in "Cultural Power," another essay in this section, "the disagreements expressed by August Wilson and myself are perceived to be over the emphasis on race in the American theatre. In a sense this is true, but in another sense, to reduce these differences to racial categories is to regard them too narrowly. Actually I believe our argument boils down to a philosophical dispute over the basic function of dramatic art"(31). This section also includes a Brustein review of *Bring in 'Da*

Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk, which, he writes, "had a profoundly dispiriting effect on me, for all its theatrical expertise"(26). This dispiritment results from the work's "victimology" and its failure to "build a path to a reconciled society"(30), and while one might prefer the approach he wishes for, it is without question that the American theatre will see many works, even those with an eye on commercial success as with *Noise/Funk*, in which black artists vent their anger and frustration over the American racial sins of the past and present. Brustein would prefer it otherwise, but clearly the statute of limitations on the tragedies of the American racial past is not yet up.

Cultural Calisthenics' first part also features essays that address Brustein's concern over the Republican Revolution's "squalid" assault on the National Endowment of the Arts. He imagines the difficulty of survival for theatres like his own American Repertory Theatre and, with only the overpriced professional theatre as an alternative, that theatre in the United States will become an elitist activity. Practicalities aside, he also writes of the "climate of demoralization among those who have been struggling over the years to educate the minds and stimulate the imaginations of American citizens"(45). He believes that the existence of the NEA is a "moral example," and without it we are in danger of becoming "the dumbest and most Philistine democracy in the Western world"(46). Also in Part 1, Brustein writes in "Homogenized Diversity" of the "melancholy paradox" that an "ideological conformity" along the lines of political correctness (55) poses. He points to three particular productions, a British staging of *A Doll's House* with Janet McTeer, and new plays, *How I Learned to Drive* and *Gross Indecency*, that he feels offered theatregoers an alternative to the "chill of individual freedom, not just from the direction of the benighted conservative Establishment, but from that of its enlightened opponents on the liberal left as well"(60).

Part 2 of *Cultural Calisthenics* features a long series of reviews called "Productions: At Home," which deal mostly with American drama, but also productions of Shakespeare in the United States. Best among these reviews is "Aspects of Arthur Miller," which explores two late Miller plays, *Broken Glass* and *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, to conclude that especially *Broken Glass* is "just another spiral in [the] stumbling career"(76) of this venerable dramatist. Brustein sees Anna Deveare Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and the television program "Politically Incorrect" as signs of the death of political correctness. He also offers pithy evaluations of a diverse range of productions, including revivals (*Show Boat, The Hairy Ape, Night of the Iguana, Chicago, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, A Delicate Balance, More Stately Mansions, Ah, Wilderness!*, and *The Emperor Jones*, among others) and such new works as Sam Shepard's *Simpatico*, Tony Kushner's *Slavs!*, Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*, and new musicals including *Rent, Ragtime, The Lion King*, and Stephen Sondheim's *Passion*.

Part 3, "Productions: From Abroad," takes the reader through a wide range of old and new plays produced in international theatres like the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Comédie Française, and the Moscow Art Theatre, among others. Part 4, "The People of the Theatre," is a particularly enjoyable set of reflective essays on a range of artists. Some mark the passing of significant figures including Stella Adler, Joe Papp, Orson Welles, and Eugene Ionesco, while others focus on Brecht's women collaborators, Christopher Durang's "poison pen," Anton Chekhov's sex life, Sam Shepard's choice of acting over playwriting, and Harold Bloom's writings on Shakespeare.

The reader passionate about the theatre will be richly rewarded by this volume, even, and perhaps especially, when in disagreement with Brustein's cogent, elegantly written essays and reviews. For the beginning theatrephile, *Cultural Calisthenics* provides a road map through the central issues confronting serious theatre and some of the most important plays, playwrights, and productions of the 1990s. However much artists of the theatre may lament the fact, there is little tangible evidence of a production once its run ends. It lives mostly in the memories of the theatregoers fortunate enough to see it. If for no other reason, the collected criticism of a critic/artist the caliber of Robert Brustein provides another way to hold on to and be inspired by those plays and theatrical productions that, for better or worse, will lead our theatre into its future.

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The Playwright's Workbook by Jean-Claude van Itallie. New York and London: Applause, 1997. ISBN 1-55783-302-8.

After years of teaching playwriting and drama courses in colleges throughout the United States, including Yale University, Princeton, Amherst College, New York University, Columbia University, and the University of Colorado, Jean-Claude van Itallie realized the need for a text that would provide exercises for playwriting students. *The Playwright's Workbook* is his primer for budding playwrights who want to master the art of writing for the theatre.

Van Itallie's premise for the book is that playwrights should consider themselves vessels or instruments through which energies may flow; as such, our minds and bodies must be groomed for the task of playwriting. Just as acting classes often provide exercises for performers, *The Playwright's Workbook* offers writing exercises that will stimulate the playwright's imagination and develop rigor in creating characters and plots, in listening for natural rhythms of speech to write

dialogue, and in understanding the ramifications of working alone and then with directors and performers. The book is divided into thirteen workshop sessions or "chapters" presented in order of increasing complexity. Within each session, van Itallie includes timed writing assignments designed to reinforce key concepts the playwright is expected to learn.

The first workshop prepares the playwright for the physical task of writing. Van Itallie discusses the importance of the physical space and the preparation of the body to be physically fit for writing. He then introduces the seminal exercise, "Overheard Voices," which is designed to force the playwright to listen to live voices in order to hone one's ear for the way words are spoken. The purpose is to distinguish how emotion is conveyed through pitch, volume, tone, pauses, repetition, accent, and rhythm.

The next few workshops provide the playwright with the necessary training to establish the fundamentals of craft. Frist, van Itallie offers suggestions for creating characters. He emphasizes that characters should be in conflict, the essence of drama, and that they should be "complex, interesting, profound, and human enough that of course they want something" (32). He asserts that conflict becomes dramatic if the characters are simultaneously unique and familiar, passionate, and articulate. Next, there are tips and exercises to enable the playwright to envision clearly the playing space, the "where" of the drama, which includes such variables as time of day, angle of audience perception, quality of the lighting, colors and textures of stage props, season and weather, and volume of space. Finally, van Itallie offers suggestions about how to develop what he refers to as the "what" factor, the dominant image that the playwright uses throughout the play—the emotional core of the drama. When the "what" is fully understood, the playwright can then develop the plot so that there is a central plan that will hold the interest of the audience. Van Itallie also discusses the importance of a "hook" to begin the play, the need to have a climax for each act, the reason to end on a striking image, and the significance of a high moment before intermission. Van Itallie suggests that when the playwright has carefully grounded the elements of "who," "what," and "where" for the spectators, they will be more apt to accept the unusual, even the shocking, with regard to the play's structure.

Much of the remainder of the book focuses on using "Overheard Voices" as a starting point to develop an ear for the way people speak. One workshop involves listening closely to conversations to learn how individuals use idiomatic words and phrases. Another, titled "Intimate Overheard Voices," requires the listener to record conversations of people who know each other well in order to pay more careful attention to rhythm, pitch, tone, pauses, and musicality. Van Itallie also includes segments on writing songs for the theatre, plumbing dreams to evoke specific images, and creating ceremonies to be included in the performance piece. With regard to editing plays, van Itallie suggests that the playwright finish

writing (a creative right-brain process) and then edit (a logical left-brain endeavor); doing both simultaneously will lead to paralysis. Van Itallie stresses the importance of reading the play aloud, especially to friends and interested observers, keeping a journal, and constantly collecting ideas that might become the genesis for a play. Finally, he reminds the playwright that the play is not finished until it is refined through rehearsals and production. Thus, van Itallie notes that workshop productions are good starting points; in any event, finding a skilled, enthusiastic director and working closely in harmony with that person is essential for a successful production.

Throughout *The Playwright's Workbook*, van Itallie requires the budding playwright using this text to study seriously the masters of the art: Tennessee Williams, William Shakespeare, Arthur Miller, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Eugène Ionesco, Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud, and Anton Chekhov. Many of the games and exercises of the workshops are designed so that the student-playwright learns something different each week from each of these great dramatists For example, through a reading of Artaud, students discover the healing power o theatre as a means of psychotherapy that can profoundly affect individuals and, ultimately, society. By forcing us to engage Chekhov's heart and mind, the playwriting student can better grasp how characters can be sad and funny—the epitome of tragicomedy that makes us laugh through a vale of tears. These masters of the theatre have been van Itallie's mentors, and he obviously expects that some of the lessons learned from them can rub off on future playwrights as well.

The weak link in many theatre programs today is the way playwriting is taught. Production courses, such as acting and directing, as well as theatre history, criticism, and theory, rely on established texts. Van Itallie's book could serve to fill this gap in playwriting courses where no definitive text exists. A second edition is needed to correct several typographical errors before this book becomes a staple in theatre courses. However, despite these few editorial gaffes, *The Playwright's Workbook* serves as a sorely needed model for the training and development of aspiring playwrights and also as a practical guide for experienced dramatists who periodically will need to reexamine their craft in order to grow as artists.

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CORRECTION

In my review of *Peter Shaffer. Theater and Drama* by Madeleine MacMurraugh-Kavanagh published in the Spring of 1999 (Vol. XIII, No. 2) issue, I incorrectly stated that this book was "the only significant study" of Shaffer aside from C. Gianakaris's *Peter Shaffer: A Casebook* (Garland, 1991). There are, in fact, three other fine studies of Shaffer's work: *Peter Shaffer: Roles, Rites, and Rituals in the Theatre* by Gene A. Plunka (Farleigh Dickinson University Press), *Peter Shaffer* by Dennis Klein (Twayne), and *Peter Shaffer* by C. Gianakaris. I am grateful to Gene A. Plunka for pointing out these unfortunate omissions and my apologies to the authors of these valuable texts.

– James Fisher