

cursory (chapter 7, 125–35). Initial steps toward a more serious study of musical technique had been undertaken by some authors like Alexander J. Ellis, Carl Stumpf, and Erich M. von Hornbostel, all of whom worked in the very cradle of “comparative musicology/ethnomusicology” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Problems of relating musical notations in early Western texts on Siamese music to transmitted compositions are explained in the discussion given in chapter 8 (137–56).

The concluding chapter 9 (157–63) summarizes the main results of this evaluation of Western written accounts of Siamese music, stating their relative strength in organology, theater, function of music, and autobiography of authors, as well as their weakness in music theory, regional musical traditions, Siamese views on music, and repertory.

Despite the broad range of issues, the study under review proves to be a homogeneous account and very valuable analysis of early Western perspectives on Siamese music. It substantially contributes to our understanding of several periods in the history of Siamese music, while also providing an understanding of substantial changes in the perspectives of Western writers and observers. The ethnomusicological community will be eagerly expecting a complementary study of indigenous documents, which I hope will shed more light on the history of one of the world’s richest musical cultures.

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INDIA

BANSAT-BOUDON, L., Editor. *Théâtres indiens*. Collection Puruṣārtha 20. Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1998. 368 pages. Illustrations. Paper 195F; ISBN 2–7132–1262–6. (In French and English)

This book is a collection of sixteen contributions on Indian theater (classical theater as well as traditional and modern). In addition, it contains two contributions on the image of India in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French theater.

In the introduction the editor admits to her failure to identify a thread connecting the various contributions, which indeed range from a scholarly article on the function of comic scenes in traditional theater, to a poetic reverie on the audience witnessing the Big Bang. In this way the book compares poorly with a study like *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance*, edited by F. P. Richmond, D. L. Swann, and Ph. B. Zarrilli (Honolulu 1990), which offers a representative and well-balanced overview of the theatrical traditions of India.

The selection of the topics appears to have been completely haphazard; moreover, no attempt was made to edit and bring the individual contributions in line with each other. Thus, in notes 31 and 33 on page 291 in his article on South Indian ritual theater, Tarabout refers to certain features of the North Indian Rāmlilā, ignoring the relevant information provided by Tourlet-Divedi, also in the present collection. This lack of editorial intervention, however, is especially regrettable in the case of topics or questions common to several contributions. A case in point is the relationship between ritual and theater. It is discussed by Malamoud, who tries to define the theatrical in ancient ritual; by Tourlet-Divedi in her study of Rāmlilā, in which at a certain moment the actors are worshiped like gods; by Carrin, who deals with possession in the *bhūta* cult in Karnataka; and, finally, by Tarabout. All these scholars agree in placing ritual acts, possession, and theater on a kind of cline. Next, each scholar

tries in her or his case to determine the boundaries between, for instance, possession and acting. The book would clearly have profited from an attempt by the editor to compare these attempts more fully and more seriously than is done in the short paragraph on p. 15, which on closer consideration merely complicates the matter further by adding to the acting cline the boy whose picture is found on p. 16, who as part of his begging tricks is dressed like Śiva.

As to the individual contributions, they are of varying interest and quality. In this I leave aside the contributions by Jackie Assayag and Marie Fourcade on French plays by De la Harpe (1739–1803) and Judith Gautier (1845–1917), respectively, which had been set in India. These two contributions (301–25 and 327–62) would no doubt have fitted better in a book specifically dedicated to the image of India in the West. It should be noted, however, that neither of the two plays concerned has ever been performed or published, so that no conclusions can be drawn from them with regard to the spirit of the time.

I fail to see the relevance of the poetic reverie by Lokenath Bhattacharya (21–23) and the note by Jean-Christian Fonteyne on the pheasant (363–68). The only contribution on modern Indian theater is by Kamalesha Datta Tripathi (239–245), who deals, rather superficially, with the way in which modern Indian theater has recycled elements from classical and traditional theater. The article unfortunately contains a few mistakes that misrepresent classical drama and that should not have escaped correction (e.g., the one actor in the *bhāṇa* is the *viṭa*, an impoverished scholar, not, as written on page 241, the *vidūṣaka*; the equation on page 244, note 13, of *lokaḍharmī* with “the natural and simpler style of acting” and *nāṭyadharmī* with “the highly conventional and ornate one” is simply incorrect; for these two terms, see below). Also, I fail to be able to follow the conclusion drawn in note 5 that the classical, “triple concept of auditorium—square, rectangular and triangular—is another way of freeing the theatrical space.”

In her introduction (9–20) Lyne Bansat-Boudon deals with (classical) Indian theatrical concepts. The discussion has somehow come to be dressed around the concept of *māyā*, or illusion. However, as far as I know, the concept of *māyā* does not play a role in traditional ideas about drama. In fact, *māyā* is a highly negative force, as becomes clear from the myth about the origin of drama, referred to by Bansat-Boudon herself in note 15, in which at a certain point the demons with their *māyā* immobilize the actors.

What one would have expected here, especially in anticipation of some of the other contributions, is a discussion of the concept of *nāṭyadharmī*, or “the order of things in drama,” which as such is opposed to *lokaḍharmī*, “the order of things in the ordinary world.” *Nāṭyadharmī* refers, among other things, to a situation in which an actor on stage is invisible to the other actors. (For other dramatic strategies covered by the term *nāṭyadharmī*, see my review of Bansat-Boudon’s *Poétique du théâtre indien*, in *Asian Folklore Studies* 52: 172.) This also accounts for the absence in classical Sanskrit drama of the presentation on stage of battle scenes or ritual sacrifices, which simply cannot be abbreviated without becoming absurd or, in the case of sacrifices, on pain of creating a threat to the order in the world. Here we touch upon a distinction between drama and ritual, for a dramatic performance can be included in the performance of another play and be abbreviated or broken off.

Bansat-Boudon’s own contribution deals with the fourth act of Kālidāsa’s Sanskrit play *Vikramorvaṣṭya* (45–101). In this act, together with the text of the dialogue, we find the text of the *dhruvās*, that is, of the songs filling in the silent moments in the performance. The author attempts to trace back this version to the fifth-century playwright Kālidāsa himself, but in doing so does not account for the fact that linguistically within the *dhruvās* we can distinguish at least two layers. They clearly represent a later addition. The *dhruvās* are part of the performance practice. As such, they must have figured in the performance of the other acts of the play as well. The real question is, then, why they have been entered into the text of this particular

act only. In this connection I should like to refer to a note by Nadine Stchoupak (*Uttararāmacarita*, Paris 1935, xxxi) in which she compares the madness of king Vikrama resulting from the loss of the nymph Urvaśī in the *Vikramorvaśya* with a scene in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in which Rāma in similar circumstances addresses the trees and animals of the forest. The texts of the *dhruvās* are likewise about animals, or addressed to them! Most likely the addition of the *dhruvās* to the text of the fourth act is a purely literary embellishment and not, as Bansat-Boudon tries to argue, an attempt to enhance the operatic or spectacular aspect of the performance.

Three other contributions deal with classical Sanskrit drama: Marie-Claude Porcher's article is about the function of the verses in drama in the midst of the prose dialogue (103–22); Carole Jaspert-Pansu's article is about the function of the performance of a play within the *Uttararāmacarita* by the eighth-century playwright Bhavabhūti (123–36); and Charles Malamoud's contribution addresses the relationship between ritual and drama by focusing on the dramatic elements in ritual (25–43).

Alessandra Iyer's contribution about the dance movements depicted on Javanese temple walls (137–51) might have benefited from a more careful reading of the relevant passage from *Nāṭyaśāstra* (Gaekwad edition IV, 34–169), which deals with the dance movements (*ḥaraṇa*), i.e., the complex of poses (*sthāna*) and steps (*cārī*) used specifically in the performances of battle scenes (*vyāyāma*) (169cd; see also 55: "I will specify the steps made in fighting [scenes]").

Two contributions deal with specific developments that took place in Bengal—namely, Bożena Śliwczyńska's article (207–17) about the transformation of the Bengali *yātrā* during the last 150 years under the influence of modern, cosmopolitan attitudes, and, vice versa, the influence that the *yātrā* has exercised on modern, Western types of dramatic performances including film; and France Bhattacharya's analysis (219–37) of the autobiography of Binodinū Dāsī (1863–1941), a celebrated Bengali actress who participated in the development of modern Bengali theater in the last part of the previous century.

The remaining articles deal with traditional performance traditions or religious cults which show strong theatrical characteristics, all from South India. Annette Leday provides a description of the preparations of Kathakalī performances (153–67) pieced together from her observations of many such performances. Perhaps in order to give a focus to her highly detailed description (which includes even tea breaks!), Leday opens with the proposition that this complex theatrical tradition has survived by a strict observance of the rules. If anything, her material shows (160, 161, and 164) that the "old" rules are often observed not at all strictly or are even abandoned altogether. There follows (169–88) an analysis by Eva Szily of a small handbook on hand movements and the meanings conveyed by them current among Kūṭiyāṭṭam actors in Kerala.

The contributions by Christiane Tourlet-Divedi (on the sacred theater of Rāmlilā), Marine Carrin (on *bhūta* cult versus *yaḥṣagāna*), and Gilles Tarabout (on comic scenes in rituals) all in their own way address the question of the distinction between ritual and drama. At certain points in a Rāmlilā performance (189–205), the spectators worship the gods as if they were temple images; at the wedding of Rāma and Sītā, women sing humorous wedding songs (*gāṭī*) and an old man recites mantras as he does at ordinary weddings. Tourlet-Divedi argues that in such situations the women and the old man have changed from mere spectators to figures in the story. Carrin investigates, among other things, the differences between the *bhūta* cult and *yaḥṣagāna* performances in Karnataka (247–67). The *bhūta* cult revolves around the descent of a *bhūta* god or demon into a specialized "actor" and the tantrums and utterances of this possessed person. The *bhūta* cult shares many elements with the local *yaḥṣagāna* performance tradition. But unlike in *yaḥṣagāna*, the *bhūta* cult has a religious value

as the masks are worshiped, and it includes the performance of applying make-up in front of the audience. Furthermore, the god addresses members of the audience directly through the actor. At the same time, as in Rāmalīlā, the audience addresses the god in the person of the actor. This latter phenomenon may well be one of the main distinctions between ritual and theater, or at least classical Sanskrit theater, which is based on the clear distinction between fiction and reality. As I will show elsewhere the function of the play within the play in Bhavabhūti's *Uttarāmacarita* discussed by Jaspart-Pansu is precisely the fictionalization of this distinction.

Tarabout (269–99) deals with the function of comic scenes within ritual, which have been taken to imply skepticism with regard to the powers of the gods addressed in the ritual or of the ritual itself. By discussing several examples of such scenes, Tarabout shows that something else may be the matter. For instance, clowns performing an imitation of *pūjā* simultaneously with the actual *pūjā*, while underlining the unperturbedness of the *pūjāri*, averts the evil eye of the spectators. In another example, the *bhūta* ridiculed in the comic scene in the end becomes the ideal performer of the rite; he symbolizes the devotee who despite poor instructions is able to complete the sacrifice.

Tarabout distinguishes various presentations of god: a figure in a comic scene; a passive icon to be worshiped (Rāmlīlā); a living image in a *tableaux vivante* (Cāttaṅ festival); and god addressing the audience through a medium. Tarabout sees in these situations different degrees of incarnation that would each have its own specific function in the ritual, the basic distinction being between the harmless passive/living image, on the one hand, and the uncontrollable, potentially harmful possessed person, on the other. This distinction is supported by stories collected by Tarabout about incidences in which the border between play-acting and real life was crossed, to which may be added the one of Sītā acting Sītā in Bhavabhūti's *Uttarāmacarita*.

With three exceptions, all contributions are in French. The articles are accompanied by brief English summaries. Nevertheless, some seem to have been addressed primarily to a French-speaking audience, if not by their topic then by a restricted use of publications available on the topic at hand in languages other than French. Leday's article on Kathakaḷi is a case in point; it makes attempt to match the given description with the one by Zarrilli in the American publication referred to above. Note in this connection, for instance, the *tōḷayam* dance mentioned by Leday on page 161, which is absent from Zarrilli's description. In Carrin's description of the *bhūta* cult, we hear of a kind of football match and a quarrel about a pot without any attempt to explain the meanings of the incidents or a reference to the literature where we may find the desired information. In the latter case, a simple reference to Heidrun Brückner's *Fürstliche Feste*, Wiesbaden 1995, pages 220 and 217ff respectively, might have done. Omissions such as these, in combination with some of the points mentioned above, place the book as a whole virtually outside the ongoing scholarly discussion.

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HASAN-ROKEM, GALIT and DAVID SHULMAN, Editors. *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. x + 329 pages. Author and subject index. Paper £25.00; ISBN 0-19-510856-6. Cloth £65.00; ISBN 0-19-510186-3.

Among the many types of folklore, riddles have long been the object of scholarly attention and count among the earliest and most widespread manifestations of worded thought. The book