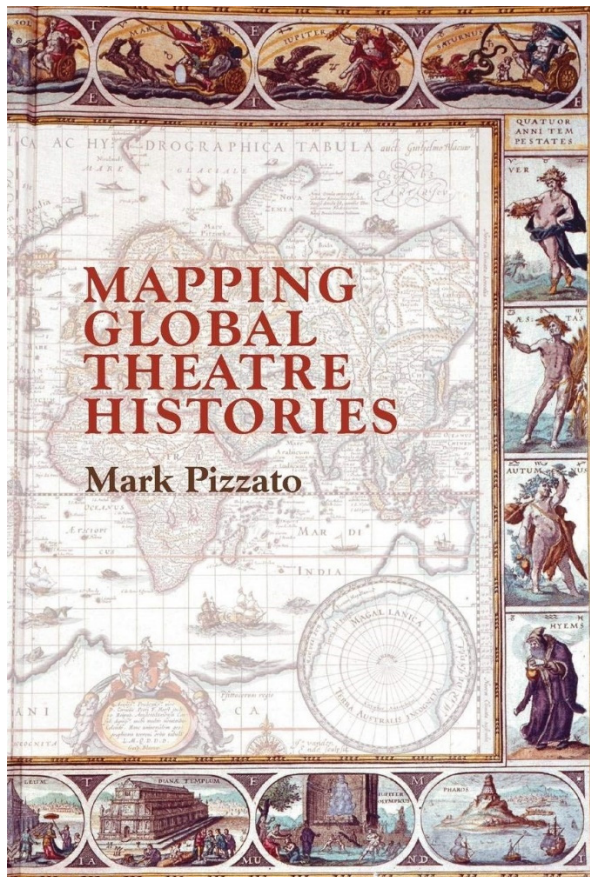


## *Mapping Inner and Outer Theater Histories*

**Book review: Mark Pizzato, *Mapping Global Theatre Histories*  
(London:Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)**



When I was in school the translation of Vitto Pandolfi's 1964 *Storia universale del teatro drammatico* was compulsory reading material. The bibliography of theatre history is quite abundant by now, with books such as

*History of the Theatre* by Oscar Brockett and Franklin Hildy, republished from the original 1968, to now at its ninth edition, or the beautiful and very expensive, six volume *A Cultural History of Theatre* by Christopher Balme and Tracy Davis published in 2017.

*Mapping Global Theatre Histories* by Mark Pizzato is an online and offline text book providing historical and genuinely global knowledge, mapping significant areas of world theatre. The timeline covered stretches from prehistory, explained also through the evolution of the brain, all the way up to postmodern performative events of the early 2000's, such as domestic anti-governmental terrorism, or Stan Lai's eight hour long *A Dream Like a Dream*.

What is the general need of a theatre history book today when information, accurate or not, is a quick, online search away? As the author explains, knowing and to reframing the past, for its usages in the present and the future, would allow us better chances of not repeating the proverbial past mistakes: "Thus, global theatre history acts as an uncanny mirror, revealing our repressive blind spots and stereotypical projections in wider arenas of theatricality today."

The book is arranged to be an ideal resource for performance and theatre studies teaching-learning. First of all, paragraphs in the books are numbered, and with keeping to around one type of information per paragraph, this makes it easy to reference in school group work. Secondly all of the fourteen chapters have a three-tier system structure: a timeline of the period and region under discussion, highlighting important developments of that period, allow for historical contextualization of the information to follow in the chapter. Secondly the chapters have questions allowing for individual reflection and making the information relevant for students. Thirdly each chapter concludes with very a subchapter of good references for the period under discussion.

As a reader you cannot get lost, swamped under loads and layers of text. Everything is clearly mapped and you can easily navigate, around time and the globe. The mapping vocation of the book delivers also small maps set within the larger maps, in the form of comparative tables. This is the case of anti-realist styles and movements, spanning from the 1890s through to the 1930s, or the one elaborating the types of African theatre and their characteristics.

What makes from Pizzato's historic perspective an innovative one in the field of theatre history, and what is a deal-maker for this book, is actually the first chapter: *Theatricality in Deep History and the Human Brain*. By now most theatre history have very similar first chapters, with theatrical manifestations linked to religious rituals and losing themselves in the "fog of times". Pizzato, as the author of *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain* (2006) and *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil* (2011), brings in a transdisciplinary perspective looking at the evolution of the brain to map out the possible shapes of theatre evolution in the past, and thus connecting what material history cannot account for. The animal-human evolution of our brain's "inner theatre" sets the stage for the understanding of historical developments and present practices, through involving: contagious emotions, mimetic desires and rivalries, mirroring neurons and primal drives, all the way to "enfacement" and "body-swapping experiments".

The neurological perspective is employed not only to account for historical perspective but also to possibly expand the field of theatre history, from the out world to the inner world because: "Technologies of inner/outer theatricality have multiplied from deep history to today: in person, onscreen, and online.". The book brings into discussion not just the historical dimension of time, where we occupy the well-known time-space of a glimpse, but also the personal historic timeline, which is the longest timespan one individual has actually been involved in history. The reflective exercises proposed throughout the book guide the personal time to the thinking of the larger historic time line. These exercises, formed as bold questions, suggest how one might reflect and make present parallels leading to the construction of personalized global theatre histories, that explain and include also one's inner theatre. Prehistoric theatre understood as deep historic theatre makes for an engaging vision of theatre, even when information is missing.

As constant discoveries and historical reconnections can reorganize and give new meaning to past events, making written historical accounts sometimes incomplete, slightly incorrect or even obsolete. Clearly some history books "age" better than others. Mark Pizzato's e-book, which is also the version consulted in the case of the current review, has a built-in failsafe mechanism in the form of a link button at the beginning of each chapter, called "check for updates". Since the past is never truly past this history of the theatre

is open to some present influences. It would seem that from its publication a few months ago there have been no updates, and that the “document is current”, on the chapter on “Medieval Europe and Premodern Africa, Australia, and the Americas”, for instance. This is not to be understood that the e-book has a built-in automatic update function. Rather, the reader is redirected to “crossref” webpage, an online service that provides addendum services on updating, correcting or retracting e-published content. While doing this the reader does not lose control over the information, and the history cannot be reworked at any point, but the book can reflect the historical accuracy of its time.

The same way the first chapter sets the scene and brands this volume as a remarkable one, so does the last chapter, or the lack there of. The book is proposing as a closing chapter a chapter on “Global, Postcolonial Theatre”. First of all the concept of postcolonialism could be problematic in itself, depending on who puts the “post” in postcolonial, but also it is too much aligning to the version of linear temporalities of theatre histories that we are already used to and that the books sets out to delineate itself in the beginning. And especially “today” when we are seeing an increase in digital and immersive experiences the understandings of neurology and inner theatre can illuminate directions of future development, instead of leaving us with the “fog of the future”. Also, a bit leaving to desire are some sub-chapters, such as the third subchapter of “Modern Realism and Anti-Realisms”. This is a two paragraphs long subchapter, with one paragraph on social realism, and one in Nazi propaganda, hence titled “Social-realism and Propaganda”. Also, the one paragraph Dada subchapter acts more as an aide-memoire. We will continue to try and access the “check for updates” button.

All things considered, *Mapping Global Theatre Histories* is a good theatre history text book, judging by structure and content, with the great innovation of this volume evolving around neurology and inner theatre as ways of understanding and constructing theatre historicity, and thus making scholars think twice about theatre history, as well as “their theatre history”.

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