Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre

Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre is the first substantial history of the origins of dramaturgs and literary managers. It frames the recent explosion of professional appointments in England within a wider continental map reaching back to the Enlightenment and eighteenth-century Germany, examining the work of the major theorists and practitioners of dramaturgy, from Granville Barker and Gotthold Lessing to Brecht and Tynan. This study is the first to position Brecht’s model of dramaturgy as central to the world-wide revolution in theatre-making practices, and is also the first work to make a substantial argument for Granville Barker’s and Tynan’s contributions to the development of literary management today. With the territories of play- and performance-making being increasingly hotly contested, and the public’s appetite for new plays showing no sign of diminishing, Mary Luckhurst investigates the dramaturg as a cultural and political phenomenon.

Mary Luckhurst is Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of York. Her publications include On Directing, On Acting and The Drama Handbook (with John Lennard), and she has co-edited Theatre and Celebrity in Britain 1660–2000. Her current projects include editing Blackwell’s Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama and Blackwell’s Companion to Contemporary Drama, and writing a book on Caryl Churchill. She has written numerous articles on contemporary theatre for journals such as Contemporary Theatre Review. In addition to her academic research, Mary Luckhurst is also a playwright, dramaturg and director, and has most recently directed Caryl Churchill’s Far Away at the York Theatre Royal.
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Dramaturgy
A Revolution in Theatre

Mary Luckhurst
University of York
For John Lennard
Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre

C H A P. XX.

A manager's difficulty arising from the offer of new plays and farces—Reasons assigned for refusing them—Colley Cibber's behaviour to authors—Mr. Garrick puts a negative on Douglas—Cleone and the Orphan of China—Agrees to refer the merit of the latter to the arbitration of Mr. Whitehead—Manoeuvres of the author and manager—Obliged to act it.

The most difficult and irksome task which a manager of a theatre can, perhaps, undergo, arises from his connection with authors. To accept, or refuse a play, is a matter of more consequence than the world in general imagines.

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Acknowledgements

This book was born of my curiosity as a playwright, dramaturg and theatre historian. All playwrights wonder about the readers of their plays, and in England dramaturgs encounter mystified questions about their work. I simply began with the question of why so little appeared to be known about the history and practice of literary management in England.

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Abbreviations

AD Artistic Director
BBA Bertolt Brecht Archive
BBC British Broadcasting Corporation
BL, UTM British Library, unbound Tynan manuscripts
CA Churchill Archive
DNB Dictionary of National Biography
GDR German Democratic Republic
HWA Helene Weigel Archive
NPT New Playwrights Trust (Writernet)
NT National Theatre
NTA National Theatre Archive
OED Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition)
PA personal assistant
RNT Royal National Theatre
RSC Royal Shakespeare Company
RST Royal Shakespeare Theatre
SED Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
SJT Stephen Joseph Theatre
ZK Zentralkomitee