

cautions that it is not enough to direct a play and assume that learning is occurring. Secondary school theatre educators are responsible for creating an educational framework for learning.

A criticism of Lazarus's work is that her focus on "best practice" may be elitist and misrepresent the reality of everyday theatre classrooms. Success or failure of secondary school theatre practice may not have anything to do with learner-centred or performer-centred perspectives; sometimes students respond to the personality of their teacher. Ask two teachers to do the same lesson, and most often two different outcomes will emerge. Is not the quality of "best practice" a combination of years of experience, political climate, cash flow, community ties, school environment, degree of work, time of the year, and luck? What about the voices that did not match Lazarus's philosophy of learner-centred practice? Perhaps students who are routinely barked at by directors to stand three-quarters left are learning something about discipline that is equally valuable to students that are discovering blocking for themselves. Also, with having so many options to structure our theatre programs, could theatre teachers not justify any kind of worthwhile learning that occurs in their classroom?

Regardless of the above criticism, the wisdom in this book has great potential to make a huge impact on the training of North American secondary school theatre teachers, both new and experienced. Lazarus advocates for excellent theatre, whether traditional or experimental, but not at the expense of the learner. "Best practice" is a search for a shared identity, as a way of building a community—a community where theatre and student learning are interwoven and equally respected. At last, a book in the right direction.

JOHNNY SALDAÑA, ed.

Ethnodrama: An Anthology of Reality Theatre.

Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira, 2005. 230 pp.

Mia Perry

As the very title of this book makes clear, its subject, *ethnodrama*, is positioned as "reality theatre." The book is an edited anthology of such dramas, written by scholars, teachers, and theatre artists in North America over the last ten years. Due to the newness of the material and the relatively recent coinage of the term "ethno-

drama,” a large portion of this anthology is dedicated to providing the context, methodology, and impact of such a form. To this end the book consists of instructional guidelines on playmaking and theoretical analyses on theatre arts followed by a selection of exemplary ethnodramas, each introduced with background information on context and process.

In his introductory chapter, Saldaña relates ethnodrama to other types of theatre such as “theatre of the oppressed,” “theatre for social change,” and “sociodrama.” This edited anthology goes on to situate ethnodrama in the context of theatre practice and, to a lesser extent, research methodology and representation. As a new departure in traditional scholarship, ethnodrama is summarised effectively with the following description:

An ethnodrama [...] consists of dramatized, significant selections of narrative collected through interviews, participant observation field notes, journal entries, and/or print and media artifacts. (2)

An advocacy of this form of theatre is at the heart of this book, as well as an underlying argument for the power and efficacy of ethnodrama in social justice and human development.

Johnny Saldaña is a theatre education professor who came to research from a background in theatre practice. This perspective colours the anthology and informs the theoretical framework of the book. In Saldaña’s view, ethnodrama is, at its best, an equal collaboration between theatre artist and qualitative researcher, resulting in an artistic work based in the reality of a particular social circumstance. Overall, this book provides an informative overview of ethnotheatre, although the view is skewed and the resulting portrayal is somewhat unfulfilling. Saldaña’s theatre-based approach leaves the “ethno” of ethnotheatre very much neglected in his theoretical and practical discussion of the proposed form. Furthermore, in emphasising the principle of a shared authority of both theatre art and qualitative research methods, he seems to depreciate both into stereotype and generalisation.

The anthology offers more than its title allows: it offers perspective and definitions to capture a new negotiation of theatre as a representation of research as well as advocacy and analysis in the field as a whole. As an introduction to ethnodrama this book has much to offer. I am troubled, however, by the over-simplified light in which Saldaña portrays theatre, not only in his

instructional guidelines on writing a script but in his theoretical analysis of the form. Saldaña idealistically claims that “though film and television are nothing more than chemical, electronic, and digital forms of live theatre, theatre is generally more honest in what it is up to” (9). I find it misleading to describe theatre in such an innocent way. Theatre does have the potential to be a meaningful and powerful form of human expression, but to paint all of theatre in a shared light of benevolence and integrity seems simply naïve.

This narrow perspective of theatre also seems to extend into Saldaña’s contextualisation of ethnotheatre in relation to the art form of theatre as a whole. In his introduction, he acknowledges in a subtitle that “All Playwrights Are Ethnodramatists” (4), but in concluding this point he separates “reality theatre” from the history of theatre without offering any argument as to why or in what way this new selection of *ethnodramas* are distinguished from their ancestors (5). The ethnodramas that are represented in this anthology vary in subject matter, some focusing on social issues in schools such as homosexuality, others delving into socio-political areas such as street life for homeless youth in New Orleans. The excerpts reveal a variety of styles and quality of writing both in terms of theatrical and ethnographic relevance. Each piece is introduced by Saldaña, providing context to the subject matter and brief information on the process of research behind the piece. Despite the rich variety of material presented, it is notable that the work is entirely North American situated and taken from the last ten years. In the context of this book, these choices may be valid, but an acknowledgement and justification of these decisions is lacking, especially considering the immense influence of other parts of the world on this type of theatre. The emergence of ethnography in theatre has been particularly pronounced in areas such as South America (in *Theatre of the Oppressed*) and Britain (with *Theatre in Education*).

That being said, Saldaña’s argument that the union between ethnographer and theatre artist can lead to representations of research that can foster more participation, meaning, and impact than traditional report-style documentation is worthy and well founded. The ethics, the processes, the contradictions, and the cross-sections which occur in this potentially expansive and innovative relationship are implied but unexplored in this anthology, and although this book may not be the place for such discussion, it seems to be of critical relevance to the continuing exploration of this form of research representation. As an

anthology, Saldaña's book presents a series of issue-based plays of great interest in themselves, but overall the collection inspires more questions than answers, which is not necessarily a bad thing after all.

**BRYANT K. ALEXANDER, GARY L. ANDERSON AND
BERNARDO P. GALLEGOS, eds.**

***Performance Theories in Education: Power, Pedagogy and the
Politics of Identity.***

Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005. 274 pp.

Monica Prendergast

I was most pleased to see this book appear. As an interdisciplinary scholar in the fields of drama/theatre education, applied theatre, and curriculum studies, I have been convinced that performance theory has much of value to offer education. Performance theory sees many aspects of culture and society as performances that are constructed for multiple purposes and audiences. In *The Future of Ritual* (Routledge 1993), field founder Richard Schechner describes the “broad spectrum” approach of performance studies and considers that “The four great spheres of performance—entertainment, education, healing and ritual—are in play with each other” (20-21). Performance Studies, established over the past twenty years or so, is a hybrid field coming out of anthropology, sociology, theatre, and cultural/communication studies, and is interested in how performance functions as *social efficacy*, *economic efficiency*, and *technological effectiveness* across many sectors of society (see Jon McKenzie's *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*. New York: Routledge, 2001).

Education has paid little attention to performance studies to date. Even sub-fields of education, such as my own area of drama/theatre education, have shown scant interest in performance theory. This American book, edited by one professor of communication studies and theatre (Alexander) and two professors of education (Anderson and Gallegos) is the first of what I hope will be a major consideration of performance theory applied to education. The editors and contributors focus their attention on the critical aspects of performance theory that analyze power relations and questions of the politics of identity in pedagogy through performative lenses. A couple of key essays in the collection effectively attend to these issues in an educational context.