

[book reviews]

Light Plot Deconstructed

By Gregg Hillmar

Reviewed by William Browning

A Practical Guide to Stage Lighting, 2nd Ed.

By Steven Louis Shelley

Reviewed by Ellen E. Jones

Special Makeup Effects for Stage and Screen: Making and Applying Prosthetics

By Todd Debrececi

Reviewed by Heather Fleming

Collaboration in Theatre: A Practical Guide for Designers and Directors

By Rob Roznowski and Kirk Domer

Reviewed by Beth Watkins and Michael Mehler

Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik: Scene Design and the American Theatre

By Anne Fletcher

Reviewed by Arnold Aronson

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up on a specific technique, you will find it well organized and easy to navigate.

Basic steps

Debrececi breaks the process of creating prosthetics down into basic steps, starting with life casting. Anyone who has ever taken a cast of a body part will realize that this is a larger undertaking than it might appear at first and one which absolutely must be done correctly in order for the rest of the process to be successful. To help with this important step, Debrececi breaks down life casting by body part, so you can start with teeth, face and neck, before working your way through bust, hands, legs, feet, and finally full-body casting. He gives clear instructions, beginning with safety concerns, prepping of the subject, mixing the casting medium, and finally, proper application and removal of medium.

I myself recently consulted the book's life casting chapter as a refresher when preparing to do a life cast bust for a project. Not only is the text easy to follow and logically ordered, but there are clear and helpful pictures provided to give a step-by-step guide. This is especially helpful when you need to consult the book midway through casting, as it is simple to glance over and compare notes with the photos.

The chapters on sculpting the makeup, breaking down the sculpture to produce molds, and casting the appliances are all as detailed and helpful as the life casting chapter. No step is omitted, and lengthy discussion is given to

safety, choice of materials, proper measuring and mixing, and finishing of cast pieces.

In addition to Debrececi's obvious passion and expertise, what is appealing about this guide is that it is written from personal experience the author has gained over years of creating makeup. He is very clear that these are the methods that he, in his own work, has found to be the most effective or efficient. But where relevant, he also discusses alternative techniques and methods. This will appeal to more experienced readers, who will bring a variety of experiences and opinions to their projects and who will undoubtedly appreciate the discussion of multiple techniques. It will also give someone new to special effects jumping-off points to explore other variations options.

Hair and wigs

Included in the book is a chapter on hair and wigs, which provides a solid overview of types of wigs, wig making materials, and basic handling of wigs. The author provides helpful photographs of various wig-making processes and materials, including the proper application of facial hair. While he does provide a step-by-step diagram of the process of ventilating (knotting hair into mesh to make a wig or facial hair), the chapter is more of a basic overview, rather than an in-depth tutorial.

The book wraps up with a final chapter on other makeup effects. These include application of bald caps, use of nose and scar wax, wounds,

disease, aging, and tattoos. This is a nice finish, as it allows easy access to a number of stand-alone techniques that pop up quite often in the makeup designer's world. Unlike older books on the subject, Debrececi's techniques are modern and functional and will easily find their way into even a casual makeup artist's repertoire.

Interspersed throughout the chapters are short blurbs about industry professionals from theatre, film, and television. These sections include quotes from the professionals, photos of their work, and often process shots, showing the step-by-step progression of effects, some of which will be familiar from television and movies. There are also appendices which include a glossary, recipe list, and recommended books. Also included is a DVD with tutorials and illustrated guides to a variety of techniques.

All in all, *Special Makeup Effects for Stage and Screen: Making and Applying Prosthetics* is a welcome addition to the libraries of makeup and special effects artists.

Heather Fleming, has designed wigs and makeup for the *Illinois Shakespeare Festival*, *American Players Theatre*, the *Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts*, *Gustavus Adolphus College*, the *Barter Theatre*, and the *Krannert Center for the Performing Arts*. She is currently the wig designer/master at *Actors Theatre of Louisville*, where she oversees wig and makeup for fifteen shows a season in three spaces.

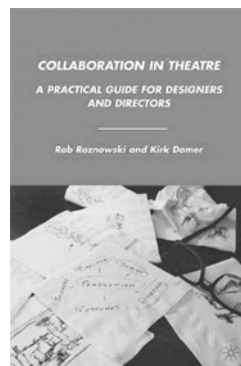
Collaboration in Theatre

A Practical Guide for Designers and Directors

By Rob Roznowski and Kirk Domer; New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 204 pp. Cloth, \$90.00. Paper, \$28.00.

Reviewed by Beth Watkins and Michael Mehler

There are not many resources available that specifically focus on theatre collaboration, particularly collaboration among directors and designers and other members of the production team. Most design and directing textbooks mention the importance of collaboration and suggest models where the director leads the team



or the designers bring in inspirational images for the director. But the primary focus of those books is on the individual training and development of directors and designers. Co-authors

Rob Roznowski and Kirk Domer have made an important first contribution to this unexplored field with *Collaboration in Theatre: A Practical Guide for Designers and Directors*.

Roznowski, who heads the acting and directing program in the Department of Theatre at Michigan State University, and Domer, who is head of design there, declare their intention is to create "healthy" and "expeditious" collaboration that can be used in any situation. The emphasis of the book is practical: establishing common vocabulary between parties, underscoring good communication, and recommending methods of script analysis and research that

will support the collaborative process.

The book is divided into three sections: Collaboration in Theory, Collaboration in Practice, and Collaboration in the Classroom. A majority of the text appears jointly written, but each contributor also inserts individual comments throughout. These notes can illuminate the material at hand or highlight slight differences of opinion.

Developing a team

The most effective of the three major sections is Part I, which focuses on the nuts and bolts of developing a team process firmly rooted in American practice. The director is the leader who defines the primary vision and guides the script analysis. The designers and director conduct parallel research, leading up to the presentation of initial designs and the consequent collaboration of ideas. Communication throughout the process is encouraged among director, designers, and the company, including actors and management. And all is evaluated through a post-mortem process. Some aspects are not effectively defined, however. They advise practices to avoid but do not give specific advice about how to achieve better practices.

The structure of these chapters endorses a segregated and stratified approach. Because Roznowski and Domer first discuss the work of directors and then that of designers, they unintentionally reinforce the notion that the designers simply react to a director's preliminary work. Nevertheless, the overall impact for collaborators is quite positive. This section offers a pragmatic outline of a process which can be both modeled and taught. The emphasis on script analysis as a collaborative endeavor, research, and conversation encourages a thoughtful approach to projects that allows for input from all members of the team and discourages the practice of leaping to design outcomes too early in the process.

Part II is a case-study of collaboration on a university production of the Cy Coleman musical *The Life*. While the co-authors try to present a balanced view of their work (including when they did not follow their own theory), the case study is not particularly enlightening. Given the publication date and the date of the production

(2005), it is disappointing that they did not try again with another show. This first person approach makes for some interesting admissions and insights, but it doesn't serve well to test a theory. The photographs are an effective way to document the process, but the absence of developmental sketches de-emphasizes the process in favor of the final product.

Perhaps three more brief case studies of collaborations by others in different work situations would have been helpful: college or university setting, professional setting with an emerging company, professional setting in an established union house. By observing others in the collaboration process, the co-authors might have been more critically engaged in outcomes

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of the project, judging less on its success as a department production and more on an objective assessment of the collaborative process.

Course on collaboration

Part III outlines the development of a course on collaboration. This section of the book is intended for graduate-level students who have had practical experience in directing and design. Students are encouraged to exchange roles on different class projects to develop an appreciation for the need for clear communication, both verbal and visual. Having significant practical experience as directors and designers prior to the course will make the role exchange more valuable.

Part I, on collaboration theory, would be very useful in undergraduate courses in directing, design, script analysis, and dramaturgy. The emphasis on pragmatic goals and clear commu-

nication benefits students as they first tackle the roles of designer and director. The co-authors stress healthy, respectful interactions between colleagues, always a good basis for establishing professional relationships. As a graduate text, it provides a good basic structure for a course, but that course would need to be augmented by more theoretically and aesthetically sophisticated challenges to push directors and designers into new discoveries.

The book raises but does not directly address additional issues. In college and university settings, the power dynamic among faculty, staff, and student directors and designers can be very challenging. Some time spent addressing concerns around power and experience level would be useful, especially in a book aimed at a college/university audience. As the director, Roznowski seemed to be listening more than listening to his designers. Instead of beginning the

process with his visual research and his ideas, perhaps there might be a process of encouraging more genuine discussion and brainstorming over possible approaches. It would be useful to develop a model where the director encourages designers to help wrestle forth the initial vision of a production.

Michael Mebler designs and Beth Watkins directs as members of the theatre faculty at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, where they have collaborated on many productions. Mebler has designed scenery and lighting in Chicago, Austin, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Hampton Roads, Virginia, and is currently Vice President of Programming for USITT. Watkins's articles have appeared in Theatre Topics, Theatre Journal, the Journal of Medical Humanities, and the anthology Performing Adaptations.

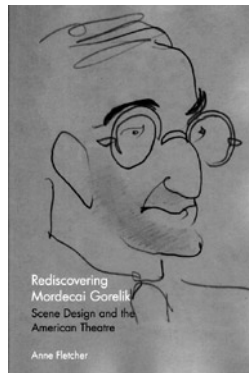
Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik

Scene Design and the American Theatre

By Anne Fletcher; Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2009; 304 pp. Paper, \$37.50.

Reviewed by Arnold Aronson

Mordecai Gorelik was one of the significant figures of twentieth-century American stage design; in fact he was one of the significant figures of twentieth-century American theatre. His design of burlesque-inspired, brightly colored Americana for John Howard Lawson's *Processional* in 1925 is one of the iconic images of the New Stagecraft era. His eleven productions for the Group Theatre in the 1930s had a transforming effect on their work and thus the work of the generations that followed in their wake. He met Bertolt Brecht while designing the Theatre Union's 1935 production of *The Mother* and became perhaps the first proponent of Brecht's theories in the United States. Despite the tempestuous encounter between Brecht and the Theatre Union, he and Gorelik became friends—Brecht would later write an essay, "A Little Private Tuition for My Friend Max Gorelik." Gorelik designed Arthur Miller's first Broadway hit, *All My Sons*.



But his most lasting and influential contribution may be his book, *New Theatres for Old*, published in 1940. The result of his travels investigating the theatres of Europe in the interwar years, it introduced the American public to the leading figures of European theatre. It served as a history of scenography, it looked at the cultural significance of theatre, it examined theatre as a moral and political institution, and it introduced Brechtian ideas to the U.S. long before other theatre artists discovered them.

And yet for all this, I would venture that his name would draw many blank stares from the current generation of theatre students and perhaps even the younger cadre of designers. For that reason alone this biography of Gorelik

by Anne Fletcher is an important contribution to the understanding of the evolution of American theatre through the first half of the last century. Fletcher began corresponding and speaking by phone with Gorelik for a few years before his death, though they never met. Subsequently his wife continued to provide Fletcher access to his writings, diaries, and records of his work. Fletcher thus had unprecedented access to a treasure trove of Gorelik materials.

An American career

Gorelik was born in Russia in 1899, but his family came to New York in 1905. So unlike some of his Russian contemporaries, notably Boris Aronson, his education and career were entirely in the U.S. He began his professional career in 1920, primarily with the Neighborhood Playhouse and the Provincetown Playhouse. During the early '20s he assisted or studied with Cleon Throckmorton, Lee Simonson, Norman Bel Geddes (on *The Miracle* and *The Divine Comedy* project), and Serge Soudeikine. But most significant was his work with Robert Edmond Jones, who became a mentor and supporter. Based on his diaries and letters, Fletcher paints a picture of a talented but difficult, angry, and