

quantity and concentration of the information offered in some passages negatively affected readability.

At any rate, the salience of the book lies in the plenitude of information acquired mainly from the primary (archival) resources. The profoundness of this study on French-Polish relations in 1944–1980 offered in this monograph thus cannot be disputed.

*Michaela Káželová*

Jeff Johnson, *The New Theatre of the Baltics, From Soviet to Western Influence in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007, 222 pp. ISBN 978-0-7864-2992-9.

Theatre in the Baltic state seems very remote not only for Central Europeans but for many others. Jeff Johnson's book is an attempt to introduce this quite unknown realm of European cultural heritage to a broad spectrum of readers. The author himself in the preface admits that he does not speak any of the Baltic languages and that he is not an expert on this area. He grew interested to this topic through an experience with Lithuanian dramatic art that later led him into the study of drama in the other two republics.

First chapter, "Crisis of Relevance", does justice to the pivotal theme of all three national theatres: after the acquisition of independence, actors, directors and playwrights have been searching for their place in the post-Soviet society. The three Baltic republics suffer from the same problems as theatres of the other countries with a similar historical experience such as insufficient financial resources, decrease in spectators and commercialization. The author outlines possible solutions that the individual theatres and theatre companies implemented. First and foremost, it is a contemplation over the function of theatre in current times where theatre does not serve as a disguised critic of the regime and that does not serve as the only means of entertainment anymore. The contemporary world has brought a wider scale of opportunities and theatres need to deal with them as best as they can. Just like small nations search for their place in the new Europe, theatres confront the issue of how to establish themselves as small and in terms of language inaccessible theatres in the globalized world.

Next three chapters are devoted to the individual national theatres. As Jeff Johnson recognized in the introduction, his journey started with Lithuanian drama, which is also the first one he deals with, followed by the Estonian and Latvian dramatic production. Each chapter starts with an introductory historical overview that enables the reader to understand the used terms and the background of

the respective dramatic art. One of the major sources the author relied on were numerous interviews with actors and directors that also take up a substantial proportion of the book. Through the interviews Johnson introduces the reader with individual theatrical ensembles and their plays. He also adds views of critics, actors and directors on each of the themes of the plays. This way, his account has gained an insider perspective. Naturally, the author drew many comparisons between the republics in order to provide a better understanding of the differences in dramatic styles.

This publication also contains a great number of black and white pictures of actors and plays. There is a description of the play and its significance under each picture. At the end of book is a list of footnotes, bibliographical sources and an index. Most of the used sources are in English but Johnson also relied on Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian sources that he had translated. The index includes a list of plays, playwrights and key drama terminology.

*The New Theatre of the Baltics* is a very useful reference book for any reader who wishes to find his way through the dramatic work in the Baltic republics. It not only offers a summary of the most important playwrights, actors and plays but also attempts to make the author ponder over the function of theatre in post-communist societies. Johnson offers a great insight into a hardly accessible topic to anyone who is not familiar with the local languages, but a topic that is no less interesting than any other European theatre.

*Olga Brabcová*

Polly Jones (ed.), ***The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era.*** London: Routledge, 2006, 279 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-54588-4.

This collection of papers focuses on the period after Stalin's death that was characteristic of manoeuvring between reforms, for so long needed to maintain the Soviet system. Popular topics such as the importance of N. S. Khrushchev, his struggle for power and political reforms are left aside for the sake of an often underestimated aspect of the post-Stalinist period: social and cultural reforms, their impact on the population and people's reactions to the reform. The authors of the anthology strive after emphasising the dynamics of the reform movement and creating a new framework for cultural and social changes of the Khrushchev era.

The volume comprises of three parts, whereby the first one is devoted to public opinion and the reaction of society to the reforms. The first study by Miriam Dobson from the University of Sheffield examines a poorly researched area of Destalinization –