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Managing Culture: Reflecting on Exchange in Global Times eds. Victoria Durrer and Raphaela Henze.
Palgrave Macmillan (2020).

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Summary:

A collection of essays on intercultural best practice in global arts and education policy and management with real-world case studies.

Abstract:

Managing Culture reflects on the damaging power dynamics at play across global culture and seeks to gather critical analysis and case studies from across the globe to address issues under the headings of Conditions, Practice, Education and Future Direction. Rich with useful examples and analysis the book manages to both educate the reader and provide examples for constructive change.

Key words: Managing Culture; Global Exchange; Intercultural Policy; Cultural Arts and Education.

Review: *Managing
Culture*
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As a writer-director-producer of thirty years in the industry, and a specialist in intercultural practice, I am honoured to be invited to review *Managing Culture – Reflecting On Exchange in Global Times*, whilst acknowledging that I stand outside academia and ipso facto will not write in its codes nor necessarily address its concerns as I review the work. In the exciting collection of essays they have gathered here, Victoria Durrer and Raphaela Henze interrogate the socialisation processes around ‘professional’ culture and the management of culture in arts and cultural management practice, in education, in training, in teaching and in learning. The book considers the institutions, organisations, groups, and individuals who coordinate and lead the protection, marketing, mediation and financial organisation of creative and aesthetic expressions as well as reflecting on how this ‘management of culture’ is involved in the creation of and the experience of education and training. As an artist seeking to both make and manage work, to ‘operate’ as it were, within the global cultural templates these forces create, *Managing Culture* brings fresh perspectives on what I experience in the front lines of intercultural practice. My belief is that it is also essential reading for cultural managers and educators.

In their introduction, having defined what is meant by ‘the management’ in relation to the arts - the organ deciding who is valuable, who gets supported, who gets distributed - Durrer and Henze articulate how the hierarchy of arts and cultural management plays a key role in whether policy documents and declarations of ‘rights’ to ‘cultural voice’ or ‘cultural equality’ are ever established as norms. They divide their book into four sections: Conditions, Practice, Education and Future Directions, giving us a flexible structure on which to pivot chapter contents presented by contributors from around the world. All reflect to various degrees on the core proposition of the editors: that the agency exercised by individual managers and educators in different national and international contexts reveals those hierarchies; especially as those individuals maintain, challenge or break the social rules around culture.

The first part of the book opens with J. P Singh's excellent step-by-step description of Participator Action Research and the importance of being able to challenge or question existing power relations. Singh shines an important light on the often neglected cultural processes that sustain cultural production and reminds us that these often do not exist outside the cultural epicentres of the global north. Building on the foundation Singh has created, in *More Than Just Lost in Translation: The Ethnocentrism of Our Frames of Reference* and the *Underestimated Potential of Multilingualism*, Raphaela Henze continues the book's effort to build the reader's intercultural competency, focusing on the potentially divisive effect of terminology such as 'social impact', 'inclusive society', 'empowerment', and 'post colonialism', revealing power imbalances and some eye-watering white-bias blindness. Wielding judicious quotes from fellow scholars and cultural participants about how they view these terms, Henze's chapter is essential reading for anyone engaged in shaping intercultural/transcultural participatory arts at any level.

In *Value as Fiction: An Anthropological Perspective*, Kayla Rush builds on the inequalities of infrastructure and language that have gone before to unpack the notion of 'value' in culture. She describes value as a 'fiction', quoting Appaduria (1986) in describing funding applications as 'tournaments of value' resulting in successes for some who then enjoy positions of great power. This short chapter will make informative reading for anyone who has ever struggled to articulate the 'value' of the arts against a backdrop of ever-changing criteria and buzz words. It also offers readers from outside traditional power networks mental tools for attempting to describe the problems they face in their own tournaments of value.

Moving on to Section 2 of the book on the topic of 'practice', the stand-out text for me was Chapter Six: Lisa Gaupp's *The 'West' versus 'the Rest'? Festival Curators as Gatekeepers for Sociocultural Diversity*. Gaupp's article

explores how curators are Goldilocks-like intermediaries who define diversity, and want it to be just right, to suit them (my description not hers). She exhorts us not just to critique neo-colonial power hierarchies but also to look at how our art conventions came into being and how they can be changed. Gaupp's exploration of the notion of 'transcultural diversity' as something that can lead to 'decentered postcolonial analysis, instead of the conventional model of core, semi-periphery and periphery countries (p130)' will help any practitioner who feels disempowered by the status quo. However, it is in her sections on Curatorial Practice at International Performing Arts Festivals and Curators as Gatekeepers that Gaupp makes her most important points, taking us on a journey towards understanding how the norms and relationships of the powerful dominate global arts opportunities, and asking what could be possible if

the unconscious biased conventions within curatorial practice could themselves become the topics of exploration in festival programmes, creating new meeting places for the performing arts. (p149)

As a practitioner, I want all festival programmers I deal with to read this article.

In the introduction to the collection, Victoria Durrer asserts that 'very little critical examination of programme development, curriculum design, and teaching and learning practices [...] have emerged alongside or even resulted from internationalisation.' (p14) Thus, Section 3 of *Managing Culture* aims to address this anomaly and delves into the educational processes that will need to change if we are to see improvements in the Conditions and Practice described in the first two sections of the book. In Durrer's excellent *A Call for Reflexivity: Implications of the Internationalisation Agenda for Arts Management Programmes Within Higher Education*, I was particularly excited by the section on the Politics of Teaching the Management of Arts and Culture. Durrer unpicks the relationship between higher education and who gets to determine what cultural forms gain prestige. She cleanly summarises

various authors' hopes for higher education as a crucible of 'empathy and understanding among ethnicities, cultures and nations' (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p187) but also challenges educational assumptions within Western institutions and lays the foundation for the chapters to come later in this section. Durrer's writing sheds light on the need for further research on proposed methodologies for self-reflection in the face of interculturality and one would hope that her writing in this area will prompt further studies under her own authorship and by others in the field.

Cultural Management Training Within Cultural Diplomacy Agendas in the MENA Region by Milena Dragičević Šešić and Nina Mahaljinac is another excellent, clear, specific analysis of how 'neo-colonial' training fails to work in the long term. This is the kind of article one turns to for excellent examples of how things should not be, and how they must change in international intercultural training. In twenty-three well-written pages they lay out their case, and by the time Dragičević Šešić and Mahaljinac draw our attention to the importance of training and education in the MENA region that focuses on critical reflections, equal partnerships, local practices, inspiring and motivating self-generated visions, networking and governance models (p228),

we are in complete, well-informed, agreement. I feel confident there are lessons to be learned from their work for arts programmers far beyond their chosen sphere of analysis.

One of the most important chapters in the book, in my opinion, is Melissa Nesbitt's, *Silence is Golden: Cultural Collision in the Classroom*. The sphere of research Nesbitt bases her work on is not enormous, just 15 semi-structured qualitative interviews: but it takes place at King's College London in the teeth of British exceptionalism, amongst reams of generalised 'glossy brochure' positivity inviting international students to pay large sums of money to study in British universities. Nesbitt's careful analysis of the real

intercultural situation occurring in British academia with the arrival of international students is one of the very best I have come across and is full of important and timely reminders for anyone grappling with the true effects of the enormous numbers of international students at British universities: interrogating whether the supposed benefits to them are real, as well as looking at the effect on the staff and institutions teaching them. This article is humble and thorough; essential ethical reading for anyone in management of a British or American university intent on attracting and retaining international students. It will also be fascinating for anyone motivated to study culture and explore interculturality.

This section of the book concludes with Hilary Carty's *Intercultural Exchange: A Personal Perspective from the Outsider Inside*. Carty's standpoint isn't purely as an academic, although she often finds herself in front of a classroom. Her article neatly describes the age-old problem of being seen as a representative of 'other' and being placed in the position of being 'expert' on race, geography, religion, customs and traditions. As she says: 'Must I perform as your expert just because I am different?' (p263). Thus, Carty raises the issue of the academic intercultural visits going 'one way' - calling them cultural tourism rather than intercultural exchange. Placing Carty's non-academic perspective at the conclusion, the section in which *Managing Culture* assesses the role of Education in its field of interest neatly reminds us that Education does not exist in a vacuum but interacts constantly with the wider world.

Offering the reader different perspectives on future directions in Section 4 of *Managing Culture*, the curated articles dig deeper into the pivotal issues of citizenship, diversity and the environment as these relate to cultural policy and the arts. In *Navigating Between Arts Management and Cultural Agency: Latin America's Contribution to a New Approach for the Field* we get a confident and competent perspective from the global south by Javier J

Hernández-Acosta. His chapter introduces the reader to the Latin American definition of cultural agency - the arts as a tool for dealing with dictatorship, civil war, inequality and marginalisation in the Latin American context - thus showing the importance of including methodologies that go beyond the capitalist approaches of Britain and the United States in bringing diversity to arts management.

I personally found Shu-Shium Ku and Jerry C.Y. Lui's *Managing Cultural Rights: The Project of the 2017 Taiwan National Cultural Congress and Culture White Paper*, incredibly compelling. Ku and Lui present a meticulously described (if acronym heavy) account of Taiwan's attempt to engage its population in cultural policy as the country moved towards better democratic processes from 2000 onwards. Ku and Lui give us a detailed understanding of how, in 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party advocated a true bottom-up approach to cultural policy, collecting the public's options about cultural citizenship and recent cultural movements in civil society - an experiment that plugged everyone into a lengthy collaborative public conversation about Taiwan's cultural policy. Read this chapter for a really interesting case-study at a national level, pertinent for anyone managing on-going cultural policy engagement. What was most fascinating to me however, was the revelation that Taiwanese policy clearly stated that it was part of citizens' responsibilities to be informed and to have an opinion about their culture, thereby sharing the responsibility for cultural engagement equally between citizens and cultural institutions. This was a detail I cannot wait to share in arts policy discussions in my own sphere of activity.

Rethinking Cultural Relations and Exchange in the Critical Zone by Carla Figueira and Aimee Fullman closes the book with an examination of global cultural management in the context of the environmental crisis. I did have concerns that this review of education, culture and the global context needed to demonstrate greater understanding of the interplay between global north

versus the global south, the intercultural dynamics in real classrooms, and maybe an exploration of how the Anglo/North American mode of classroom engagement dominates in the context they wish to influence. As a practitioner I am always alert to thinking that risks instrumentalise artists. However, it is undeniable that our thinking must situate cultural management in the context of the existential threat that is climate chaos.

Reading *Managing Culture – Reflecting On Exchange in Global Times* gifts readers with numerous moments of new deep insight and examples to return to again and again. As an immigrant practitioner, I sincerely hope that the book will be read both within and beyond academic circles, as I believe it contains articles of a quality to provoke profound changes in thinking and ways of working in dominant western cultural management. Durrer and Henze have curated an edited collection of articles that will be an important resource for cultural managers, programmers, policy makers and those working in intercultural arts. I haven't come across anything else quite like it before, and I suspect that it will be passed to hand to hand, with favourite bits highlighted. In reading the book I have had my thinking about cultural and education spaces refreshed and challenged and I have been armed with examples that will allow me to point out issues and tackle injustices in the future. I can already see examples of ways in which I can use this research to enrich my outreach and rehearsal technique. *Managing Culture* has amply repaid the time I have invested in it.

Andrea Montgomery is a bilingual, Delhi-born, Canadian theatre maker who set up Terra Nova, Ireland's only dedicated intercultural theatre company, 14 years ago. She has worked with hundreds of artists and emerging artists from across the island of Ireland and the world, tirelessly striving for greater equity and fair access to professional opportunities in the Creative Industries. Her practice and methods feature in academic articles and books from Galway to Melbourne. A director with more than 65 productions to her name she is also a writer who has had multiple scripts produced for radio and stage. She has produced in the West End, run English and Northern Irish theatres, been a founder member of an Irish touring consortium and undertaken projects in Ireland, Greenland, Iran, Macau, Canada, Hong Kong and across the UK. She is comfortable working in other languages and frequently puts herself in artistic situations where she works through translators. A long time Shakespeare specialist, Andrea has also explored puppetry, devising, multilingual and site-specific work.

NOTES

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