

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Contemporary Women Stage Directors

Paulette Marty

Methuen Drama

Released 21 March 2019

While it sounds as if this latest volume in the Methuen Drama Theatre Makers series is directed exclusively towards female readers, possibly against the initial expectations of its creator when she started on the venture, Paulette Marty from Appalachian State University in North Carolina has compiled a book in which there is almost as much that will be of interest to men.

The main reason for this is that almost every one of the opinions in the first two-thirds of this book of interviews could easily be attributed to directors of either gender.

Only in the latter stages does Professor Marty concentrate on issues of gender, but in those sections the views generally range widely across a variety of diversity issues.

The initial idea was to interview as many mid-career female directors from both the UK and the US as the writer could find. The final tally is 27, although inexplicably some are far more frequently quoted than others.

Instead of publishing each interview intact, they are carved up by topic, typically only covering about half a page at a time, although the longest stretch to a couple of pages.

This can make for a rather disjointed publication, although readers get a concentrated set of opinions on specific themes, which range from business matters such as whether to select a new play or a classic to analysing plays, preparing for rehearsals, casting, getting established, work/life balance and, much, much more.

At one end of the scale, the directors range from those running theatres such as Vicky Featherstone at the Royal Court, Indhu Rubasingham at the Kiln, Roxana Silbert at Birmingham Rep and Sarah Benson at Soho Playhouse to those working in-house such as Nadia Fall and Erika Whyman at the National and RSC respectively.

At the other, there are freelancers working on big and small stages including Americans Anne Kauffman, Rachel Chavkin and Leigh Silverman and their British counterparts such as Lindsay Turner and Paulette Randall.

As a result, there is a wide range of sometimes conflicting views on show, although there are also many congruities, as one would expect.

Perhaps the most valuable sections are those towards the end of the book when rather than addressing issues that have been covered in other publications and interviews ad nauseam, we get a look at the thoughts of these directors thoughts on gender, racial prejudice and the particular difficulties faced by women and those from minorities when trying to establish themselves in a climate that is still often covered by often unconscious or understated bias.

While it might be suggested that publishing the interviews either complete or in larger chunks could have made for more coherent read, this volume is still reads well and will help both aspiring directors and the general public to get a better view of the contemporary zeitgeist.

**Reviewer:** [Philip Fisher](#)