

# Kent Academic Repository

## Full text document (pdf)

### Citation for published version

Kohe, Geoff (2018) Book review. Marianne Schultz, *Performing Indigenous Culture on Stage and Screen: A Harmony of Frenzy*. Review of: *Performing Indigenous Culture on Stage and Screen* by Schultz, Marianne. *Dance Research*, 36 (1). pp. 113-116. ISSN 0264-2875.

### DOI

<https://doi.org/10.3366/drs.2018.0224>

### Link to record in KAR

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/69772/>

### Document Version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

#### Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

#### Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.

Users are advised to check <http://kar.kent.ac.uk> for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

#### Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:

[researchsupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:researchsupport@kent.ac.uk)

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html>

## Book review

Marianne Schultz, *Performing Indigenous Culture on Stage and Screen: A Harmony of Frenzy*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016, 242 pp., ISBN 978-1-137-59599-7

Geoffery Z. Kohe, University of Kent

Among other facets of daily life, New Zealand's performing arts scene has received fair attention within historical and contemporary analysis of the country's cultural and social landscape. Collectively this work has advanced our understandings by contextualising performing arts forms against the nation's nuanced (multi-)cultural histories, struggles and undercurrents of political, social and economic continuity and change. Prevalent in this regard are colonial and post-colonial interpretations of the industry and members' corporeal performances, practices and exchanges. In various ways (and at times focusing on different subject matter, e.g. music, dance, drama, film), these interpretations have revealed something about the centrality (or otherwise) of the performing arts within New Zealand's histories and processes of nation making. Scholars have recognised, however, that histories of the performing arts have also been intertwined with, and complicit in, the construction of cultural hierarchies, processes of 'othering', marginalisation and subordination, formation of mythscapes of inclusivity, diversity, identity pluralism and romanticised notions of a 'proud' and socially 'progressive' nationhood (Archer, 2007; Barnes, 2012; Maufort & Donnell, 2007; Treagus, 2008). Most central to this ongoing critique are important questions concerning how Māori lives, experiences, narratives of indigeneity and indigenous expression, celebration, contestation and negotiation have been configured and (re)presented within the nation's performing arts histories. Some of these concerns form the basis for Marianne Schultz's recent work, *Performing Indigenous Culture on Stage and Screen* (2016, Palgrave Macmillan).

Reflecting her scholarly and personal backgrounds, *Performing Indigenous Culture on Stage and Screen* is a continuation of Schultz's critical examinations of cultural expression and efforts to articulate and understand the myriad roles that performing arts play in peoples' lives, interactions and identities. Taking on what she terms the 'manufactured theatricalization representation of Māori and Pākehā culture' (p.20), across seven chapters Schultz invites readers to consider the nation's performing arts histories anew.

Schultz's focus is not exclusively on Māori and Pākehā performance. Although this dominates many of the chapters and empirical material, Schultz also draws on examples from Aboriginal groups in Australia, Hawaii, and Native America to evidence the depth and breadth to which the performing arts, and specifically the performing body, is imbedded within processes of nation making. Transnational and intersectional thinking affords Schultz the opportunity to consider more broadly how discourses and assumptions of 'othering', stereotyping, cultural production and meaning making have been manifest within New Zealand, but have also framed performing arts industries, post-colonial identities and more recent forms of contemporary expression writ large. Such a focus is not necessarily novel within contemporary critiques of the country's corporeal culture; certainly not, at least, within my sub-discipline of sport history. However, drawing on an extensive array of local, regional and international archival sources and secondary material, what Schultz offers is an original and cogent thesis on some of the inordinate complexities of culture, identity and

(mis)representation of 'national' and indigenous identity construction within the performing arts sector. For Schultz, notions of hybrid cultural expression/cultural hybridity play a central role in her explanation of the nuances of the nation's performing arts, and helps better understand the social, cultural and political dynamism of the performative body both in New Zealand and beyond.

There is much to delight in Schultz's work. Historians looking for exemplars of how to articulate contextual complexities while keeping the centrality of subject matter, for example, could learn from Schultz's considerations of the roles entertainment, (soft) diplomacy, played in New Zealand and British imperial relations during the early twentieth century. Not only did a regular and diverse array of performances serve to reiterate colonial and post-colonial persuasions, but also key individuals and groups (e.g., Alfred Hill and Princess Iwa – covered extensively in chapter three – tour directors and promoters, media outlets, and the performers themselves) served as agents in the production, reproduction and eventual reimaging of New Zealand and its cultural identities on stage, screen, picture and in sound. Frequent recourse to conventional, and romanticised, mythologies such as the legend of Tutanekai and Hinemoa, and emphasis on the iconic elements of Māori performing arts culture (e.g. Poi, Haka, Waka) also furthered agendas to this end. Schultz demonstrates interplays between agency and context astutely in chapter five when analysing experiences and receptions of Māori performing arts groups in New York in 1909–10. Exacerbated by dramaturgical effects, commercial ploys, and prevailing racial hype, tours of Māori performers abroad consolidated preconceptions of exoticness and ethnic binaries; but, in contradistinction, the presence of Māori on foreign shores in a 'professional' capacity challenged public understandings and stood in contrast to their maligned theatrical profile. These, often contradictory, cross-cultural encounters continue as a theme throughout the book and provide Schultz with an effective lens through which to view the progression of indigeneity within popular culture expression.

Schultz's analysis is as comprehensive as it is impressive. Readers will appreciate the meticulous care taken in the footnotes (many of which will prompt readers to take Schultz's ideas further). Moreover, by bringing readers to more contemporary performing arts examples (e.g., the 2011 Rugby World Cup ceremonies, the 2012 te reo Māori performance of *Troilus and Cressida* at the International Shakespeare Festival, and modern films such as Taika Waititi's *Boy* (2010)), Schultz reminds us that the questions that lay at the heart of her text remain open and subject to our continued interrogation. While some scholars may desire more examples, analysis or cross-cultural/transnational inclusions to widen audience appeal, the text stands commendably as it is and sits in harmony with contemporary works (such as Barnes (2012) and Smith (2013)). Alongside these works, Schultz's book is a valuable contribution that nudges historical and post-colonial debate in New Zealand and should further stir our collective intrigue with body knowledge, ideology and politics.

## References

Archer, J. (2007) The little waiata that ran away: Songs from the Maori-Pakeha cultural interface. *Journal of Folklore Research*, 44 (2–3) 239–247.

Barnes, F. (2012) *New Zealand's London: A colony and its metropolis*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.

Maufort, M. & O'Donnell, D. eds. (2007) *Performing Aotearoa: New Zealand Theatre and Drama in an Age of Transition*. Brussels, PI.E.: Peter Lang.

Smith, V. (2013) 'Colonising Waiata', in R. Ka'ai-Mahuta, T. Ka'ai and J. Moorfield, eds. Kia Rōnaki, *The Māori Performing Arts*. Auckland: AUT University.

Treagus, M. (2008) 'Agents or objects? Maori performance in Britain', in S. Thomas, ed., *Victorian Traffic: Identity, Exchange, Performance*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.