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Aurélien Bellucci (Harvard University), *Democratic Performances: How Theater Creates The People*

Aurélien Bellucci's dissertation, "Democratic Performances: How Theater Creates the People," is an extraordinarily ambitious comparative study of "people's theatre" in modern India, China, and France. Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*, an "open work" which requires the audience to write its ending, provides both a model and an entry into each of these traditions of people's theatre, where it was differently adapted and performed. Working in the original languages, Bellucci undertakes a case study in each tradition, combing close reading of political, democratic productions with interviews with spectators and participants and analysis of particular performances' relation to political issues and crises of the day. While avoiding excessive claims for the political efficacy of unorthodox performances, which are more of a "call to arts" than a call to arms, the dissertation argues that in the three different contexts, people's theatre is part of a global search for democracy and the possibility of creating a people through productions that encourage them to act out democracy. Wide-ranging, contextually sensitive, learned, and scrupulously detailed, this is a model of broad comparative analysis.