



# Writing and Rewriting National Theatre Histories (Studies Theatre Hist & Culture)

*S.E. Wilmer*

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Historians of theatre face the same temptations and challenges as other historians: they negotiate assumptions (their own and those of others) about national identity and national character; they decide what events and actors to highlight--or omit--and what framework and perspective to use for telling the story. Personal biases, trends in scholarship, and sociopolitical contexts influence all histories; and theatre histories, too, are often revised to reflect changing times and interests. This significant collection examines the problems and challenges of formulating national theatre histories. The essayists included here--leading theatre scholars from all over the world, many of whom wrote essays specifically for this volume--provide an international context for national theatre histories as well as studies of individual nations. They cover a wide geographical area: Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America. The essays contrast large countries (India, Indonesia) with small (Ireland), newly independent (Slovenia) with established (U.S.A.), developed (Canada) with developing (Mexico, South Africa), capitalist (U.S.A.) with formerly communist (Russia), monolingual (Sweden) with multilingual (Belgium, Canada), and countries with stable historical boundaries (Sweden) with those whose borders have shifted (Germany). The essays also explore such sociopolitical issues as the polarization of language groups, the importance of religion, the invisibility of ethnic minorities, the redrawing of geographical borders, changes in ideology, and the dismantling of colonial legacies. Finally, they examine such common problems of history writing as types of evidence, periodization, canonization, styles of narrative, and definitions of key terms. *Writing and Rewriting National Theatre Histories* will be of special interest to students and scholars of theatre, cultural studies, and historiography.

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