

This article has been published in a revised form in Theatre Research International [<http://doi.org/10.1017/S0307883315000255>]. This version is published under a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND. No commercial re-distribution or re-use allowed. Derivative works cannot be distributed.

Theatre & Mind. By **Bruce McConachie**. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Pp. viii + 82. £6.99 Pb.

Reviewed by Carina Bartleet, Oxford Brookes University, c.e.bartleet@brookes.ac.uk

Theatre & Mind, a recent and welcome addition to Palgrave Macmillan's growing 'Theatre &' series, offers an introduction to the increasingly influential branch of Theatre and Performance studies that explores the discipline in relation to human cognition and recent findings within the neurosciences. Written by Bruce McConachie, who has been at the vanguard of the area, writing and editing numerous studies of theatre and cognition, not least his 2008 study, *Engaging Audiences: a Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave, 2008) and largely aimed at an undergraduate readership. Given the sheer range of work and rapid growth in this sub-discipline, *Theatre & Mind* fulfills its aim admirably. McConachie's mastery of the area shows as his analysis ranges from musings on problems with the construction of the concept of the mind, consciousness and blending in performance and spectating, Chekhov's system, and physical approaches to character construction, mirror neurons and emotional engagement.

The study is divided simply into three main areas of enquiry: playing, acting and spectating. Such a straightforward delineation of the material allows its author to pack in some complex interweaving of theatre scholarship and the cognitive neurosciences, however. Although McConachie does introduce ideas from the sciences – these always inform and open up debates already present in the study of theatre and performance. One excellent example is the way McConachie sheds light on how actors realize characters from the inside or through external physicalization. His analysis explains how this debate is still founded on a dualism between body and mind which philosophical and neuroscientific research discredit. McConachie's introduction does not shy away from the science, announcing to his readers that 'I will rely on cognitive theories that understand the mind as both embodied and interactive,' (7). That said, his analysis conveys an understanding of the science in a way that is readily accessible for an undergraduate Theatre, Drama or Performance studies readership.

Overall, this is a fine introduction to this topic that is also a lively commentary on the field for those familiar with the area. The science is there but McConachie's command of the material means that it opens up debates and ideas that are squarely rooted in theatre and performance studies rather than *vice versa*. The analysis is followed up with a bibliography that ranges from the 1980s to the present and offers an excellent selection of studies for students and other curious parties to continue their exploration of this fascinating topic.