

Egil Törnqvist. *Between Stage and Screen: Ingmar Bergman Directs*. 243 Pp. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995. Paperback: ISBN 90 5356 137 4. Price: £ 15.50/US\$ 24.50. Hardcover: ISBN 90 5356 171 4. £ 28.50/US\$ 45.00.

Margareta Wirmark, ed. *Ingmar Bergman: Film och teater i växelverkan*. 248 Pp. Stockholm: Carlssons, 1996. Paperback: ISBN 91 7203 0763.

Ingmar Bergman, stage director and film maker, is a prodigious talent. At the age of seventy-eight, he now has around a hundred stage productions to his credit as well as fifty films — not to mention his directorial work for radio and television, or his literary work as playwright and autobiographer. The two books under review, one written in English and one in Swedish, both focus on the interrelationship between his various activities.

For many years the natural Bergman rhythm was to make films in the summer and theatre in the winter. Using much the same group of dedicated actors in both enterprises, he has created some amazing continuities: Bibi Andersson, to take just one example, played Karin Månsdotter in Strindberg's *Erik XIV* (1956) and major parts in both *Wild Strawberries* and *The Seventh Seal* (1957); many years and many roles later, she played Aase in *Peer Gynt* (1991) and Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* (1994). There are profound continuities in Bergman's own art — continuities which he himself has articulated by calling the theatre his 'loyal wife' and film his 'demanding mistress' and, less frivolously, by stating that his films are 'only a distillation of what I do in the theater'. But because his films are internationally available whereas relatively little of his theatre work has been seen outside Sweden, the literature on Bergman (of which there is a great deal by now) has tended to present a gap in the perception of his directorial persona, even a split as between a Dr Jekyll and a Mr Hyde. A study like Lise-Lone and Frederick Marker's *Ingmar*

*Bergman: Four Decades in the Theater* (1982), written from first-hand contact with Bergman directing in the theatre, projects a figure full of creative joy, good humour and practical commonsense; while studies of the film director, like Paisley Livingston's *Ingmar Bergman and the Rituals of Art* (1982), stress the demonic, the self-reflexive, the lapsed theologian working through pessimism and nihilism.

Egil Törnqvist's book aims to close that gap, to define the 'coherent directorial vision' that connects Bergman's work in film and theatre — and to some extent (though this is briefly dealt with) in radio. Professor Törnqvist, as a Swede with a distinguished international record of theatre research, is eminently well qualified for the task. His descriptive analysis of Bergman's 1973 staging of Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata* (*Bergman och Strindberg*) is a close and sensitive production study; and his book on *Filmdiktaren Ingmar Bergman* (1993) explores the 'dynamic audiovisual language' of Bergman's films. *Between Stage and Screen* combines, and makes accessible to an international readership, the virtues of these two studies. While it is of necessity selective — analyzing in turn six theatre productions, ranging from Strindberg's *Dream Play* in 1970 to Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* in 1994, and seven films, from *The Seventh Seal* (1957) to Bergman's last film, *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), as well as two radio productions — it aims at seeing, and in its final chapter attempts to articulate, a synthesis of theatrical and cinematic elements in Bergman's art.

Such a synthesis is also the declared aim of the volume of essays edited by Margareta Wirmark. This is the record of a symposium held in the Department of Drama, Theatre and Film in the University of Lund in 1995: the first of three planned symposia with the overall purpose of stimulating research which will make it possible to see 'Ingmar Bergman's *oeuvre* as a whole, with a unity of its own'. The project is driven by a compelling (and understandable) urge to return Bergman research to Sweden: as Birgitta Steene informs us in two excellent contributions to the volume, one on the reception of Bergman at home and abroad, and one a brief survey of Bergman research, in Sweden there has been only one doctoral dissertation on Bergman, as against sixteen in the United States. The title of the volume, which translates as 'Interaction between Film and Theatre', is somewhat misleading in that the contributions, apart from Birgitta Steene's and Egil Törnqvist's, tend to concentrate on Bergman in

the theatre. The 'interaction' and the holistic approach figure mainly as desiderata in the concluding 'conversation' about future Bergman research.

In contrast, the strength of Törnqvist's *Between Stage and Screen* is in detailed analyses which, cumulatively, establish a firm grasp on the interrelationship of themes and techniques in all Bergman's work, whatever the medium. If the list of Bergman's themes seems to take in just about everything — "the relationship between good and evil, dream and reality, art and life, mask and face, men and women, adults and children" (p.13) — the focus on techniques spares us any lengthy discussion of Bergman the metaphysical guru. Törnqvist ultimately grounds his critical approach on reception: on the emotional impact on the audience, whether in the theatre or the cinema. In the essay which he has contributed to the Wirmark volume, this impact is further pursued and explained in terms of Ingmar Bergman's art of subjective representation, an art devoted to engaging the audience's imagination, turning them into co-creators. This Bergman is steeped in Strindberg. Underlying both the book and the essay is an image of Bergman's art as subjective, autobiographical and meta-theatrical. The meta-theatricality is itself autobiographical: the frequent use of framing devices and of 'focalizers', both on stage and on the screen, is Bergman's way of giving audiences the experience, as in a child's imagination, of theatre and life as one. And the child with his toy theatre — whether Alexander, as depicted in a still from *Fanny and Alexander* on the cover of Törnqvist's book, or Mamillius in Bergman's staging of *The Winter's Tale* — is ultimately Bergman himself with his *Laterna magica*.

Margareta Wirmark, in one of her own two contributions to the volume she has edited, also leads up to exactly this point. The title of the essay would be in English 'Ingmar Bergman and the Dramaten tradition' — Dramaten being, of course, the national stage and the space in which Bergman is most at home — but we learn more about Bergman than about the 'tradition'. (In fact the two actors, Agneta Ekman and Max von Sydow, whose recorded conversation forms the opening essay of the volume, tell us more about Swedish, as against French and Danish, theatre tradition than do any of the professional researchers.) That an essay apparently aiming to inscribe Bergman in Swedish theatre history should come to rest on an admiring account of the director's self-referentiality is a measure of both the strengths and the weaknesses of this volume as a

whole. Strengths: because it contains lively, intense and poignant accounts of Bergman's art, both by actors, theatre practitioners and academics, illustrated by a wonderfully generous number of strategically placed photographs; and because of the intelligence of the questions asked about that art. Weaknesses: because of the questions that are *not* asked, and the admiration that is not contextualized. For example, if the essence of Bergman's *Winter's Tale* is in Mamillius as the director's childish *alter ego*, does this involve the audience more with Shakespeare's play or with Bergman? What has happened to any notion that it may be more important for a director to serve the play than his own autobiography? Where does self-reflexivity become self-indulgence?

In the absence of any such questions, the volume itself has become rather more self-reflexive and hero-worshipping than the authors would seem to have wanted. Some editorial pruning might have saved us from the many repetitions which occur as the same parts of the Bergman *oeuvre* are discussed from the same, or very similar, premisses. As it is, there is not quite enough distance from the kind of mutual excitement that we all know tends to be generated in a symposium; and the result is more emotion than conceptual sharpness. In essays on Bergman's use of a technique that moves from frame to close-up, or from alienation to empathy (Leif Zern), or on the theatre as metaphor in all his thinking (Maaret Koskinen) — essays excellent in what they tell us, but tantalizing in what they don't — the lack of any comparison with other directors confers on Bergman an apparent but unproven uniqueness. Maaret Koskinen, in a programmatic essay on how little work has been done to see Bergman's corpus as a whole, italicizes her statement that over the years Bergman has integrated the two arts of theatre and film '*as no other film maker has*'. She may be right, but no other film maker is brought in to support this.

It may be that I am asking for a contextualising of Bergman in film and theatre history which later symposia and volumes will attend to. If this is a kind of interim volume, one also hopes that its successors will address the question, rightly raised in the Introduction, of the 'responsibility' of Swedish researchers to set Bergman's work in the context of the culture from which it has sprung. To be rooted in Swedish culture does not simply mean an obsession with dark winters, light summers, depression, and nude bathing, as much of the rest of the world seems to think. What

exactly it does mean could no doubt be taken for granted by the participants in this symposium, but to others it needs to be explored and explained. And, sadly, if it is explained in the medium of Swedish, most of the rest of the world will remain ignorant.

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