

Theatre Research International

<http://journals.cambridge.org/TRI>

Additional services for *Theatre Research International*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance.
Edited by Dennis Kennedy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv + 689. £10.99/\$19.95 Pb; £25/\$45 Hb.

Francisco Costa

Theatre Research International / Volume 38 / Special Issue 02 / July 2013, pp 160 - 161
DOI: 10.1017/S0307883313000060, Published online: 31 May 2013

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0307883313000060

How to cite this article:

Francisco Costa (2013). Review of Aldo Brancacci 'Rhetorike Philosophousa: Dione Crisostomo nella cultura antica e bizantina' Theatre Research International, 38, pp 160-161 doi:10.1017/S0307883313000060

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

Several chapters focus on Dutch and Flemish theatre and performance, such as the taboo-breaking performances of ensemble Abattoir Fermé or the digital landscapes created by director Kurt d'Haeseleer. But we are also treated to essays on the Berlin-based performance collective Rimini Protocol, which incorporates various media and technologies into its productions and explores how theatricality infuses everyday life; an analysis of Icelandic performance artist Ragnar Kjartansson's video installations; and a convincing demonstration of how the late director Christoph Schlingensiefel successfully blurred boundaries between theatre, life and activism.

Two main threads, which often overlap, can be identified: on the one hand, the volume contains essays that examine how theatre incorporates other media and reflects on the aesthetic results and consequences of the relationship between the viewer and the performance; on the other hand, a number of chapters investigate how theatre appropriates other genres and technologies to articulate a political critique of the notion of representation or the simplified and preformulated reports offered by commercial mass media.

Christophe van Gerrewey's reflection on the paradoxical relationship between ephemeral live performance and museum installation set on documentation and preservation is among the highlights and is worth signalling out. So too is Nancy Delhalle's thought-provoking essay on the relationship between representation and responsibility, in which she demonstrates how contemporary directors incorporate prerecorded material into their productions in order to comment on the increasingly mediatized social reality. Finally, Elise Morrison analyses performances that blur the boundaries between theatre and surveillance technologies to pose questions about how we all find ourselves under constant watch by closed-circuit television.

While several authors occasionally refer to the groundbreaking work on performance, liveness and mediatization by Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander and Steve Dixon, it is noteworthy to what extent most of them are influenced by and quote the writings of left-wing (male) European philosophers such as Althusser, Benjamin, Deleuze, Rancière and Brecht. *Bastard or Playmate?* demonstrates, in a refreshing way, the need of Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches to face the challenges posed by surveillance technologies and media manipulation in the age of global terrorism, ever-increasing consumerism and neo-liberalism. It is a rich volume that celebrates the political responsibility and potential of live performance that does not shy away from other media, but willingly embraces them to continuously mutate, and yet at the same time remains one of the most innovative and relevant art forms today.

Theatre Research International, 38.2 doi:10.1017/S0307883313000060

The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance. Edited by **Dennis Kennedy.**
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv + 689. £10.99/\$19.95 Pb; £25/\$45 Hb.
Reviewed by Francisco Costa, University of East Anglia, f.costa@uea.ac.uk

Focusing firmly on performance and leaving other books to cover literary issues, the *Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance* is an updated and compressed version of the 2003 two-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*, and follows

the usual Oxford Companion format of gathering a large number of short articles – more than two thousand in this case – by a range of expert contributors. Arranged alphabetically, the book is in between a subject-specific encyclopedia and a dictionary, covering a wide variety of topics from biographies of directors, playwrights, actors and designers to traditions, buildings, organizations, styles and movements.

Editor Dennis Kennedy, reflecting the changing views of what constitutes theatre, states that the book ‘attempts to see theatre and performance as human expressions with large cultural significance’ (p. vii), interestingly including in his definition of performance sport, street theatre, Wild West shows, circus and even animal fights and public executions.

The layout of the book provides ease of research, including a page of notes to the reader. Cross-references are signalled with an asterisk in front of words, and each entry indicates the contributor by the means of the authors’ initials, with a key provided. A fascinating insight into the events that shaped or influenced the world of theatre and performance is provided in a timeline by Diane DeVore, which follows the main entries and puts theatre and performance events side by side with historical and cultural events. Finally, following the timeline, there is an extensive further-reading section and a list of Web resources.

The scope of the book is impressive, covering more solemn topics such as Shakespeare and Tragedy, but also Lionel Bart, Marie Tempest, the Marx Brothers, contemporary practitioners and genres such as Conor McPherson, Suzan-Lori Parks, Calixto Bieito, the Wooster Group and Multimedia Performance; historic theatres such as Haymarket Theatre Royal and Drury Lane; and even stage parts of theatres, as for example cyclorama. Inevitably some of the choices are arbitrary. Simon Russell Beale, Janet Suzman, Helen Mirren, Maggie Smith and Maureen Lipman receive entries, but Alex Jennings, Janet McTeer and Harriet Walter do not. Neither do leading provincial production houses such as Crucible Sheffield, West Yorkshire Playhouse or the Manchester Royal Exchange Group. Although this selection looks arbitrary, Professor Kennedy points out in the Preface that ‘it has been impossible to include all the material that might be desirable to cover’ (p. vii).

On balance, *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance* is a book best appreciated for what it comprises rather than criticized for what it leaves out. As a reference book, the Companions give readers a quick briefing on almost any theatrical performance subject, which will prove to be incredibly useful for academics, students, critics and other practitioners wishing to gain a foretaste of subjects which may lead to more in-depth study elsewhere.

Theatre Research International, 38.2 doi:10.1017/S0307883313000072

The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical. Edited by **Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris and Stacy Wolf.** New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 470. £95/\$150 Hb.

Reviewed by Dr George Rodosthenous, University of Leeds, g.rodosthenous@leeds.ac.uk