

*Upstaged: Making Theatre in the Media Age.* By Anne Nicholson Weber. New York: Routledge, 2006; 192 pp. \$95.00 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

The dominance of screenic media has notably influenced the production of theatre as well as altered theatre's current cultural status. In *Upstaged: Making Theatre in the Media Age* Anne Nicholson Weber draws from conversations with 24 theatre practitioners to discuss the tensions between theatre and various screenic media, seeking ways that theatre can "play to its essential strengths—language, metaphor, immediacy, and community" (x). Weber thus discusses, in a thematic way (from geographic locale to gender roles, from the rehearsal process to the rhythm of movement and voice on both stage and screen) the issues surrounding liveness in an era of exponential reproduction in the arts.

"The Media Age," as defined early on in the book, is the age of film and television. Nicholas Hytner, the artistic director of Britain's National Theatre, begins the book by writing, "I'm not convinced that anything has happened recently that hasn't been happening since *The Jazz Singer* was released—or at least since people got televisions in their homes" (1). Though this comment may seem disconnected from the remarkable cultural changes that have taken place since the advent of the internet, Hytner later expands upon this comment by discussing the democratization of the arts in online environments (2). Though the interviews seldom discuss new media affects on theatre and the performing arts, the primary scope of the book is to discuss why, as Frank Rich, the associate editor for the *New York Times*, notes, "There will always be a hunger for live entertainment [...] Why do people go to rock concerts when you could just buy the record? This is one reason the theater is not extinct and never will be" (32).

Like several of the strong and concise interviews (each ranging from 2 to 13 pages in length), Weber's interview with Julie Taymor brings out the complexities between various media forms. Taymor says:

Interestingly, theatre audiences can fill in more blanks because they have seen so much TV and film. They don't need to see a savannah fully represented on the stage because they know what a savannah looks like already [...] It is a pleasure of the contemporary theatre that you can use a kind of shorthand because the audience is becoming more visually experienced, more visually literate. (43)

Several interviews offer varied viewpoints on this emerging visual literacy and the tension between the image and the word. David Leveaux, associate director at the Donmar Warehouse in London and founder of the Theatre Project Tokyo, says, "Theatre functions by image first and foremost. It's simply not true to say that it's primarily a linguistic, primarily a text medium" (64). Anna Deavere Smith tempers this notion by arguing, "The use of language in America is just at an all-time low [...] voices have gotten smaller and flatter [...] When I studied Shakespeare, we studied speech as action. It's the same thing." She goes on to say:

When I go to speak at a college [...] I've realized that I should not be there unless I am prepared to expect of myself that the words I say are going to make a difference. No word can just drop out of my mouth when I'm onstage; each one has to be potent. (126)

Modes of artistic production are an equally compelling topic in the book. The technology of the film medium in contrast to the presence of the human body on the live stage sets up a significant dichotomy in many of the interviews. As Simon Callow, British actor and director, argues (echoing Peggy Phelan [1993]),

There's this strange phenomenon that this performance will never be repeated; it can't be. Unfortunately, the bigger musicals that are completely controlled technologically do tend



to be 100 percent the same; and the moment the theatre becomes totally repeatable night after night, then it ceases to be theatre. (21)

In contrast, Peter Hall argues that contemporary theatrical conventions, which “don’t need to be naturalistic on the stage anymore,” are in fact conceived from a kinship with filmic technologies. He argues that “cinema has freed us in the theatre” to the fluidity and grammar of jump cuts and metaphorical gestures (83).

*Upstaged* offers readers informal and accessible dialogues on issues of utmost consequence to performance studies. Although including questions around the impact of digital and networked media would have bolstered this study, the intentionally reduced focus of the book serves to allow stimulating discussions on media in which most of the practitioners have direct artistic experience. Weber’s impressive collection of interviews offers a valuable look into theatre’s current trajectories as artists seek ways to have the theatre be, as Julie Taymor says, “the sensation of life being breathed into an object by the addition of human imagination” (44).

—Jason Farman

Phelan, Peggy

1993 *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge.

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***Ghosts: Death’s Double and the Phenomena of Theatre.*** By Alice Rayner. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006; 205 pp. \$67.50 cloth; \$22.50 paper.

***Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain.*** By Mark Pizzato. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006; 323 pp. \$75.00 cloth.

The figure of the ghost has haunted theatre and performance theory almost as much as it has moonlit graveyards and abandoned houses. As figures that shimmer in our peripheral vision, between the alive and the dead, the past and the present, the real and the imagined, ghosts trouble some of the most pervasive cultural boundaries. In *Ghosts: Death’s Double and the Phenomena of Theatre*, Alice Rayner defines the theatrical, in a broad sense, as anything that takes place whenever such dualistic thought or oppositions are invoked and broken down (xii). This allows her to include largely 20th-century play texts and performances, as well as public memorials, installation art, and film in her meditation on theatre as a ghostly practice.

Rayner locates herself in a long line of ghost studies, from those by Margery Garber (1987) and Jacques Derrida (1994) to Joseph Roach (1996) and Marvin Carlson (2001). Similar to Carlson in *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, Rayner structures her chapters around the undertheorized material aspects of the theatre. Whereas Carlson’s macro-historical project deals with the operations of repetition and memory in the text, the actors’ bodies, production elements, and the performance space itself, Rayner provides more intimate and