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# Introduction: Contamination or Remediation?

Alongside director, designer and producer and the rest, a new credit is becoming common on theatre programmes: 'video designer'.

(Lawson, *Guardian*, 5 April, 2003)

As I began researching this book, a leading media commentator, Mark Lawson, published an article warning of the threat posed to live theatre by the incorporation of video. Noting the use of video designers for recent productions such as Terry Johnson's *Hitchcock Blonde*, the Royal Shakespeare Company's version of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* trilogy, and the English National Opera production of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Lawson claimed that productions seem to be 'apologising for not being films, like someone changing their appearance to look like a rival in love'. Arguing that performance gains its power from the fact that it 'is created as we watch' and identifying this with the notion of 'liveness', he concluded apocalyptically, 'recent British theatre has suggested not so much a co-existence between stage and screen as the old red velvet theatre curtains being flapped in surrender'.

Despite his melodramatic, doom-laden outlook, Lawson's article provides a useful starting point for this study for several reasons: the commonly found historical amnesia that suggests the use of recorded media in theatre is a recent phenomenon, an amnesia which this book attempts to challenge; his acknowledgement of the proliferation of such work in recent mainstream work, exemplified by its appearance at the RNT, RSC and ENO; his undifferentiating approach to various ways of using media in theatre, which also informs his view of their use as an invasion that needs to be repelled if theatre is to retain a supposedly essential 'liveness' – an outlook which this study will question.

It is true that *video* has only become common in theatre in the past 25 years, as diminishing costs, smaller, more flexible equipment, and increasingly sophisticated editing and projection have made its use more attractive. The use of film in theatre, however, extends back a century, to very soon after the invention of cinema. It appears as early as 1904 in France and was regularly used in Germany in the 1920s. While video has certainly extended the range of ways in which recorded media may be deployed, there are many areas of similarity and continuity between such early experiments, other activities in the 1930s to 1960s, and more recent developments. An investigation of these enables a longer-term perspective on current usage.

Lawson correctly notes video's more frequent appearance in recent mainstream theatre work. Even in the 1980s, apart from occasional spectacular scenic use in opera and the international tours of the Czech company *Laterna Magika* (and other work by its scenographer Josef Svoboda), few mainstream theatres employed film or video. Instead, it was companies such as The Wooster Group in the US, Forced Entertainment and Forkbeard Fantasy in Britain, Robert Lepage's *Ex Machina* in Canada, and Spain's *La Fura dels Baus*, along with occasional performance artists and experimental filmmakers who were exploring the interaction between live performers and video material.<sup>1</sup> What is notable about Lawson's more recent list is the range of venues and types of work where video is now found: at the RNT, the RSC and ENO, and in plays such as *Hitchcock Blonde* (a West End hit) and *Midnight's Children* – where the authors scripted in the use of video, as opposed to it resulting from a directorial or design decision, as is more commonly the case.

The list is easily extended. It has almost become *de rigueur* for RNT productions to include video. Nicholas Hytner's 2003 production of Shakespeare's *Henry V* treated Henry's French expedition as a modern media-war, with cameramen and interviewers attending the king, and videos depicted his younger wastrel days with Falstaff at one point. Simon McBurney's production of *Measure for Measure* (2004) employed large-scale projection onto cyclorama and floor for setting purposes. CCTV footage created the atmosphere of a surveillance society, and royal arrivals and pronouncements were again accompanied by camera crews: all this from someone who made his name as an imaginative deviser/director of physical theatre with *Théâtre de Complicité*, where the focus has always been on the performers' inventiveness.<sup>2</sup> Video also appeared extensively in the RNT production of Philip Pulman's *His Dark Materials* (2003). William Dudley, designer

for *The Coast of Utopia* and *Hitchcock Blonde*, subsequently designed Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *The Woman in White* (2004), using a cyclorama and eight video projectors to create a cinematic feel to the set, as locations shifted between various interiors and sweeping panoramas of the countryside. Towards the end, in a moment recalling early screenings of the brothers Lumière 1895 film *The Arrival of a Train*, a steam train rushed towards the spectators, some of whom ducked, 'so fantastic and realistic' was the effect (Lampert-Gréaux, 2005). The spectacular filmic setting featured in the television advertising campaign for the show, mimicking the sort of trailers normally seen for films.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout Britain well-established companies have employed video in their work: from York Theatre Royal's 2003 Christmas pantomime, *Mother Goose's Silver Jubilee*, to the veteran socialist company Red Ladder's 2004 touring show for young people *Tagged* and Boilerhouse's *Running Girl* (2002). Dealing with the electronic tagging of young offenders, the set of *Tagged* included three monitors built into manoeuvrable pylon-like structures that showed a mix of pre-recorded material and live feed of the onstage performers. *Running Girl* was a promenade performance, advertised as 'cinema made flesh'; the title character ran for 90 minutes on a treadmill mounted on a mobile platform, which was backed by a large projection screen. The platform was shunted about the Glasgow Tramway space, with cityscapes and action projected onto the screen providing a backdrop for her encounters with various figures of urban street-life.

Leading companies in dance and physical theatre, which normally place a premium on the presence and physicality of the live performer, are experimenting with video within their performances, as in DV8's *Just for Show* (2005) and Shobana Jeyasingh's (*h*)*Interland* (2002). The latter combined pre-recorded film of the backstreets of Bangalore, a projected simultaneous webcast of a dancer performing there, and live performance by two dancers in a London venue. In Belgian choreographer Wim Vandekybus's *Blush* (touring since 2002), a large 'screen' made up of vertical slats of elasticised material allowed performers to move to and fro through it. While the performance focused on the high-energy dance and risk-taking choreography associated with Vandekybus, striking effects were achieved through using the screen to project an underwater scene, into and out of which dancers leap – with stunningly precise synchronisation between their physical disappearance from the stage and their onscreen reappearance swimming underwater.

To these we might add companies who make movies on stage in front of the spectators; for example, the Dutch company Hotel Modern, which toured internationally with *The Great War*, a staging/filming of World War One, in which performers moved toy soldiers around a table-top mock-up of the Western Front made with potting compost, sand, twigs, parsley and so on. Fixed cameras and minicams wielded by the performers relayed events to a screen; spectators saw the making of this animated video of the war and the video itself, yet the impact was as moving as, if not more moving than, that of the big special effects war movies which fill commercial cinemas. The New York company Big Art Group's 2003 production *Flicker* made more camp use of a similar approach; again, performers created a movie on stage, this time a gory horror flick, while their actions were caught on camera, edited and relayed onto three screens running across the front of the stage.

So, everybody's doing it. Moreover, the fact of doing it has become a marketing tool – brochures and flyers are rife now with references to 'exciting multimedia effects', 'fascinating fusions of theatre and video', and so on. In particular, it is believed that such work will appeal to the media-savvy younger audiences which theatres are desperate to attract. Discussing his own turn towards video and computer-generated projected settings, William Dudley suggests that theatre needs to get away from bare-stage performances because younger audiences don't like

the stillness where you're in one locale for two to three hours ... . They like high visual dynamics and action, all those things people think theatre can't do. ... fine language full of profound thoughts and plays on words pass them by. (Dudley, 2004, 21)

Where early television advertised itself as bringing theatre into your home, it seems now as if theatre advertises itself as bringing television or cinema into your local theatre.<sup>4</sup> Philip Auslander has commented,

The general response of live performance to the oppression and economic superiority of mediatised forms has been to become as much like them as possible. ... [E]vidence of the incursion of the mediatised into the live event is available across the entire spectrum of performance genres. (1999, 7)

Perhaps predictably, a reaction has set in, seeing it all as just a postmodern fad, theatre succumbing to the rampant dominance of the visual in contemporary culture, or as a last ditch attempt by a threatened

industry to attract jaded customers back, when theatre would do far better to go ‘back to basics’, actors and audience in a shared space, stripped of technological trimmings. As early as 1968, Jerzy Grotowski condemned the ‘hybrid-spectacles’ of the so-called ‘Rich Theatre – rich in flaws’, which tried to ‘escape the impasse presented by films and television’ by chasing after a total theatre. Grotowski described the ‘integration of borrowed mechanisms (movie screens onstage, for example)’ as ‘all nonsense’ (1969, 19).

Of course, the binary of a ‘poor theatre’ which focuses on actor and performance and a theatre which supplements the actors’ and writers’ efforts with technology has a history stretching back to Aristotle’s view that ‘the organisation of a tragedy’s visual aspect’ was a matter for stage technicians, not the playwright, since tragedy should be able to achieve its purposes without recourse to visual effects. And the idea of the theatre being based around ‘two planks and a passion’ has surfaced in various guises before Grotowski, notably with Jacques Copeau’s influential advocacy of the *tréteau nu* (bare stage) in France during the 1920s. The reaction against employing film or video in theatre has been partly shaped by this long-running tension and oscillation between a stripped down theatre and one that enjoys the visually spectacular.

Furthermore, the history of the interactions between theatre, film, television and video has frequently been marked by border disputes between their respective cultural guardians, as each medium has in turn remediated one or more of the others.<sup>5</sup> More recent alarms over theatre remediating film, television and video are ironic, given that these media themselves originally borrowed considerably from theatre, before they developed more distinctive conventions and concerns. As the newer media evolved critics attempted to demarcate their specific qualities and conventions, often rejecting work that seemed too ‘theatrical’ for failing to acknowledge the distinctiveness of the particular medium – not that there is much agreement amongst critics as to what actually constitutes the ‘theatrical’ and the ‘cinematic’. So, for example, an influential tradition associated with André Bazin privileges film for its supposed capacity to show reality, contrasting this with the ‘artificiality’ of theatre; others privilege film’s capacity to create illusion and fantasy, and theatre is seen as being limited by the spatial and temporal constraints of live performance. Again, some critics argue that theatre is mediated – based on a pre-existent script that is then mediated by any number of different performances to produce different versions of the story and characters; Erwin Panovsky suggested

that film is less mediated and that the characters have no aesthetic existence outside the actors. From another point of view, one could argue that on stage we see the real flesh and blood human beings, while on screen we see images of performers that have been mediated by the camera. Reviewing such arguments, Susan Sontag (1966) suggests that what distinguishes theatre from film is the treatment of space – theatre being confined to logical, continuous space, while cinema may access allogical, discontinuous space. A further distinction is, of course, temporal: watching a film, we watch something that has happened in the past, whereas, watching a play, we watch something that unfolds in the time of the performance – even if it represents events from the past.

Some regard such debates as irrelevant, since live theatre has increasingly lost audiences and cultural cachet, while the electronic media of television, video and the internet have apparently established a global domination – to the extent that the idea of contemporary society being a mediatised spectacle has become a commonplace. If Tony Fry's view that television is no longer a medium 'in a context', but *the* context of contemporary life, 'an organic part of the social fabric' (1993, 13), is correct, then it is unsurprising that some theatre practitioners want to engage with it in their work. (A decade on, we might also include the internet along with Fry's television.) In contrast, the idea of theatre or performance art providing a protected zone for the 'live' experience, an oasis for those searching for personal contact in an electronic desert, has seemed attractive to some; but Roger Copeland argues that our perceptions of the world are now so shaped by exposure to media rather than immediate sensory experience that 'to assume that a few hours of "live" theatre will somehow restore a healthy sense of "being there" is naïve and self-deceptive'. For him, 'the idea that theatre's "liveness" is – in and of itself – a virtue, a source of automatic, unearned, moral superiority to film and television, is sheer bourgeois sentimentality' (Copeland, 1990, 42).

Copeland's ire is directed at ahistorical, essentialist views of what theatre or performance should be, which both underestimate the extent to which theatre has often involved a range of mediations and overestimate the oppositional potential of 'liveness' *per se*. Auslander suggests, 'All too often, such analyses take on the air of a melodrama in which virtuous live performance is threatened, encroached upon, dominated, and contaminated by its insidious Other' (1999, 41). That such discussion is steeped in ontology and deontology, as supporters and critics of intermedial work assert what theatre *is* and what theatre *should do*, marks the extent to which the introduction of recorded

material into live theatre reorients many of the ways in which theatre is made and seen.

How, then, does the introduction of electronic media reshape theatre and its reception? Despite the long history and the controversy surrounding it, few general studies of the practice and its implications have appeared, in English at least.<sup>6</sup> Individual practitioners and companies, such as Erwin Piscator, Robert Lepage and The Wooster Group, have been the subject of occasional studies in which their use of film or video has been touched upon. An issue of *Tulane Drama Review* in 1966 made an initial, but limited, foray into discussing what Michael Kirby dubbed 'filmstage'. Subsequently, scholars such as Philip Auslander and Johannes Birringer have explored more fully theoretical issues surrounding the position of theatre in a mediated society and have commented on some broader characteristics and implications of multimedia work.<sup>7</sup> Occasional articles, such as Marvin Carlson's 2003 discussion of how video extends theatrical space and Steve Dixon's 2005 discussion of how video affects handling of time, provide valuable insights into individual aspects. But there has been little systematic exploration of the variety of ways in which the introduction of film or video into theatre may radically alter approaches to *mise-en-scène*, dramaturgy, performance, modes of production and spectatorship; neither has there been much discussion of the similarities and differences between work with film and work with video.

This book will explore issues such as these through examining in detail the work of a number of practitioners who have contributed significantly to experiment in the field. After Chapter 1's investigation of the historical antecedents of contemporary work, Chapter 2 investigates how Czech scenographer Josef Svoboda, in a career spanning the last half of the 20th century, employed film to develop a more dynamic 'polyscenic' approach to production. Subsequent chapters treat a selection of British and North American practitioners who illustrate different aspects of work with video over the past three decades: The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment, The Builders Association, Robert Lepage and Station House Opera; Forkbeard Fantasy's idiosyncratic commitment to working with film will also be studied. Before moving on, however, the rest of this chapter will involve some introductory discussion of how the incorporation of film and/or video may challenge common practices and ideas about areas such as *mise-en-scène*, dramaturgy, performance, modes of production and spectatorship, while signalling some of the debates that have arisen from these challenges. It will be useful to begin with consideration of two



terms that sometimes appear in discussion of the field: multimedia and intermedia.

### **Multimedia and intermedia**

Apart from its use in discussing computer-related practices, the term 'multimedia' is often applied indiscriminately to any sort of performance event that employs film, video or CGI (computer-generated imagery) alongside live performance. Yet there is surely the world of difference between, say, a production of a Shakespearian text which occasionally uses some video projection to establish its setting or to imply modern parallels with the action, and a newly devised production in which a significant amount of the actors' performances appears on video, dialogue occurs between onstage and onscreen performers, and live relay regularly focuses attention on particular pieces of business or parts of a performer's body. In the former type of production, it may be argued that video is employed in a manner analogous to the way in which lighting, set or costumes are used to locate the action and suggest particular interpretative approaches to it; video is one of many apparatuses that collectively support performances that are otherwise built around fairly traditional understandings of the role of text and the creation of character. Such work might be properly described as multimedia. For the second type of production, where more extensive interaction between the performers and various media reshapes notions of character and acting, where neither the live material nor the recorded material would make much sense without the other, and where often the interaction between the media substantially modifies how the respective media conventionally function and invites reflection upon their nature and methods, I would suggest the term 'intermedia' is more appropriate.<sup>8</sup> In practice, the divisions are not always as neat as such distinctions would suggest, and it may be more appropriate to see these as ends of a spectrum. We sometimes encounter work which may be broadly multimedial, but which shifts sometimes towards a more intermedial approach; or we may encounter work which, to the extent that there is a very strong interconnectivity between its onstage delivery and its recorded material, seems intermedial, but which, on closer inspection, simply employs film or video to vary the mode of performance or audience address, without there being a deeper interaction between the media. Nevertheless, when considering individual practitioners and works, it may be informative to have these distinctions in mind.

I would suggest that the use of film in theatre was initially mostly multimedial, but increasingly complex interactions between theatre and the other media from the 1960s on led to the emergence of genuinely intermedial work. Despite this, much recent technologically sophisticated use of video projection in mainstream theatre reflects more of a multimedial approach; productions such as *Measure for Measure* and *The Woman in White*, for example, are more appropriately described as multimedial. Dudley's collaboration with Terry Johnson on *Hitchcock Blonde* exemplifies work that initially might seem more ambiguous. A clever exploration of desire and the cinematic gaze, it interweaves scenes in which an academic and his female student reconstruct an unknown early Hitchcock film with 'flashback' scenes involving Hitchcock and Janet Leigh's body-double for the shower scene in *Psycho*. Projection is used substantially for setting purposes and for showing reconstructed moments from the film; a couple of times video also briefly conjures up subjective fantasies of the characters. While, in keeping with its themes, the overall atmosphere is cinematic, and the brief film 'reconstructions' persuasively suggest early Hitchcock, there is little active interaction between the stage and projected material and the themes about film are worked through primarily in the action and dialogue. Despite some initial similarity with intermedial work, it ultimately emerges as a multimedial piece.

Although most of the productions that Lawson sees as exemplifying a threat to the stability of boundaries between theatre and film turn out to be multimedial, it might be argued that, at their best, it is intermedial works that pose the greatest challenge to attempts to hold onto clear-cut divisions between theatre and film and video. Often such works challenge our common assumptions about film or video as much as they extend the boundaries of what is conventionally seen as theatre. Although this study traces developments in both multimedia and intermedia, discussion of recent work will focus more on work that tends towards the intermedia end of the spectrum.

### **Scenography, *mise-en-scène* and dramaturgy**

In work that is primarily multimedial, film or video often contributes to scenography or *mise-en-scène* in relatively straightforward ways – even if the technology involved is very complex. In *The Woman in White*, for example, the narrative moves between stately homes, London streets, Cumbrian hills, a lunatic asylum and other locations. In the Victorian theatre, with its penchant for the spectacular,

the production might have deployed painted cloths and flats and many stagehands to change settings continually, with consequent effects on running time and continuity. One contemporary approach would be to use minimal scenery and a few emblematic items of setting, along with the audience's imagination, to establish changes of scene. But this is a West End musical, where audiences expect the spectacular. Here, then, the use of large-scale CGI projection, often animated in such a way as to create the effect of panning or crane shots, enables rapid transitions between scenes.<sup>9</sup> The 3D modelling and animation, aided by the higher resolution video projection now available, creates a stronger illusionistic effect than previous technologies. Also employing a revolve stage, the very fluid movement from scene to scene achieves the dynamic effect of cinematic dissolves. Nevertheless, the show is based around a straightforward plot-driven narrative, and the primary purpose of its *faux*-cinematic approach is to drive this forward in a spectacular, high-paced fashion. Unlike, say, the CGI scenography in The Builders Association's *Super Vision* (discussed in Chapter 6), little significance attaches to the virtual nature of the setting and there is little challenge to the ideological assumptions which underpin dominant representational conventions. Despite its technical sophistication, the multimedial approach is, then, relatively simple.

In more complex multimedial and most intermedial work scenography, *mise-en-scène* and dramaturgy are less easily disentangled, as the use of recorded media and live relay multiplies the scope of possible incidents, source materials, interactions, intertexts and issues, and the ways of presenting and perceiving them. The treatment of space, time and action often differs radically from dominant forms of theatre, as the camera may introduce action from elsewhere and other times, past, present, and future, or even places and action dreamt of or fantasised. Traditional boundaries between offstage and onstage become blurred, as the stage becomes the meeting-point of many locations, real and fictional, and of fictional characters with filmed real-world figures. Aristotelian and naturalistic approaches to storytelling or character depiction are often displaced, as multiple stories or no stories are told, performances become more presentational than representational, and notions of unity of plot or character are overthrown.

Multiple source-materials often appear. As we will see Piscator demonstrating in the 1920s, the introduction of documentary material may illustrate the historical context of fictional action, or the montage of contrasting material may dialectically evoke a quasi-choric

commentary on the onstage action. The RNT's *Midnight's Children*, for example, used Indian newsreel material to contextualise the action, and it has become a commonplace in recent productions of classic texts to do with war to insert television footage of contemporary war-zones in the Balkans or the Middle East, as in Peter Sellars' 1993 version of Aeschylus' *Persians*. Both approaches ultimately derive from Piscator. Apparently extraneous material may be collaged alongside the stage action, as when The Wooster Group, in *House/Lights* (1998), played scenes from a 1964 soft-core movie *Olga's House of Shame* and an episode of the television show *I Love Lucy* alongside a working through of Gertrude Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*. The collision of very different styles and media in such instances exemplifies a broader tendency to evoke the aesthetics of various genres within a single work, playing off the associations of readily recognisable genres such as soap opera, thrillers, documentaries, and so on.

Ways of viewing an event or character are often multiplied. While Piscator argued that film allowed spectators to view the subjective behaviour of characters against an objective backdrop of history provided by film, in 1941 Robert Edmond Jones advocated using film to depict the subjectivity of onstage figures – their dreams, fantasies, and memories, suggesting it could qualify or contradict the onstage action. Station House Opera develops this approach further in productions such as *Roadmetal Sweetbread* (1998), in which video projection suggests alternative versions of the onstage interactions of its performers. Onstage action may also be reframed through live relay multiplying or magnifying performers' bodies onscreen, showing them in microscopic close-up, fragmented or shot from different angles – rhetorical effects that affect how spectators interpret character and action.

Performers may also seemingly move in and out of a filmic or video world and the stage world, 'crossing the celluloid divide' as Forkbeard Fantasy describes it. At times, hybrid images may be created through the combination of a live performer and his/her electronic reproduction, as occurs, for example in The Wooster Group's *To You, the Birdie!* (Figures 11, 12 and 13). Such images may suggest echoes of Baudrillard's view of contemporary human beings as 'now a pure screen, a switching centre for all the networks of influence, and evoke the notion of the cyborg, with all its allegorical implications' (Baudrillard, 1985, 133).<sup>10</sup>

The availability of live relay has also led more recently, as in the work of Hotel Modern and the Big Art Group, and in Mikel Rouse's *Dennis Cleveland* (1996), to whole productions being built on the

premise that they are being filmed. Rouse's opera worked with the format of a Jerry Springer style chat-show, with roving cameramen filming the action onstage and in the audience, which could then see itself projected live onto large screens behind the performers.<sup>11</sup> The possibilities of live relay over the internet have now extended this further; the past decade has witnessed increasing experiment in connecting performers and audiences in different locations (see Giannachi, 2004), with Station House Opera's latest work *Play on Earth* (2006) involving performers in São Paulo, Newcastle and Singapore performing for their respective audiences as they interact with live projections of their fellow performers beamed in from the other cities.

While some practitioners, such as Josef Svoboda, have primarily used the available technology to enhance the telling of a central tale, others have adopted a more collagist approach, layering very different orders of story or event against each other, thereby often throwing into question the representational apparatuses employed. Different styles or genres play off against each other, demanding that the spectator bring to bear a range of spectatorial strategies, and challenging conventional notions of how spectators or viewers are positioned by and respond to theatre, film and television. Multiplicity of materials, viewpoints and styles is often also accompanied by a greater degree of simultaneity, more focus on visual imagery, and an increased self-reflexivity than is generally the case in theatre driven more by text, character or narrative.

These aspects also contribute to a somewhat paradoxical effect in much of the work discussed. For all that the productions make use of film and/or video, this study will suggest that, contrary to Lawson's assumptions, many are more overtly 'theatrical' than the quasi-naturalistic text-centred productions that occupy many theatres. Canadian theatremaker Robert Lepage touched on this when he suggested that 'utilising video allows me to be cinematographic, while saying things which are theatrical: my writing belongs more to theatre than cinema' (St-Hilaire, 2000, my trans.). Practitioners such as Lepage, The Wooster Group and Forkbeard Fantasy, all in their different ways, actively play with the theatrical, acknowledging the presence of the audience and the fact of theatre being created out of the interaction between the performers, their technology and the audience. In contrast, quasi-naturalistic dramas that maintain the fourth-wall convention often seem today as though they would be more suited to television than to theatre.

## Modes of production

The increased range of source materials in much intermedial work leads towards a tendency to ‘assemble’ productions, to create ‘compositions’ of images, sound, light, action and performance, with consequent impacts on how writers, directors, scenographers and performers work. The breakdown in the hierarchies that dominate much mainstream theatrical production, in which design, direction and performance serve a text, often parallels a blurring of hierarchies amongst the co-creators of such work and a diminution in the role of the author (along with the authority invested therein). Marianne Weems of The Builders Association describes how after initial periods of research, discussion and filming, the various collaborators on *Alladeen* (2003) worked in devising sessions over several weeks:

There's lots of ideas beforehand, but nothing really gets thrashed out or even seriously considered until we get it up on stage. So all the performers were there, and the primary version of the set. All the video was on the sides. Chris Kondek, an amazing video designer, was running up and down the stairs, because he had his computer off in another room. He'd get stuff mixed up, dash down, throw it up ... Dan Dobson, the sound designer was sitting next to me doing the same thing. And Norman Frisch [dramaturg] and I were working, with Martha Baer [writer], and Keith Khan and Ali Zaidi [co-designers], on what the text would be, and constantly cutting, re-editing and re-structuring. It's an almost indiscernible process ... It's sometimes hard to tell if the text leads the video or the video leads the text. (Weems, Interview, 2003)

In Builders Association performances the onstage presence of computer and video operators, and the way they share the performers' curtain call, visually marks this interdisciplinary collaboration. Such collaborative processes, of stopping and starting, experimenting, piecing together the various resources on the rehearsal floor, are common to companies such as Forced Entertainment, The Wooster Group, and Ex Machina.

Weems' account of the symbiotic relationship between the emerging text and the video material also illustrates Johannes Birringer's contention that ‘The image/sound technology itself, highly fluid and capable of instant and extensive reprocessing of recorded or generated signals, affords the producers an immediate experience of the constructability of imagery and image relations, and of decision-making and selection processes’ (1998, 114). Of course, most creative productions depend upon collaboration and the use of electronically processed materials is hardly a pre-requisite for devising processes that explore

the ‘constructability of imagery and image relations’; but the presence of such materials, or of cameras and editing facilities that allow the creative team to process ongoing performance explorations, often encourages the creation of work that is more oriented around discovering new relationships between images, texts and performances through open-ended experiment.

Such processes and the intermedial theatre produced inevitably impact on how performers work when performing. It is a commonplace that film acting makes different demands of actors from those made of stage performers. Acting for the cameras without an audience; performing blue-screen sequences without the scenery that will eventually be seen onscreen; playing whole sequences without other participants in the scene actually being present; film performers often function in a way which is more ‘virtual’ than, say, a stage performer working in a naturalistic production, where the presence of other characters, a representational set and an evolving narrative, all contribute to a very different relationship between performer, character and action.<sup>12</sup> To perform in intermedial theatre is similarly likely to make different demands of performers, as they may shift in one performance between working with variously ‘real’ and ‘virtual’ performers and settings, or as their performances may seem to be subsumed within a much more diversified complex of images, sounds, and actions than is often found in more narrative or character-based theatre. Although some of their performances may take place in a similar continuous ‘real time’ to that of naturalistic theatre performers, and in the presence of an audience, the demands on the performers are often closer to those placed on film performers.

Concerns have been raised about the consequences of the technical demands made of performers. Many productions studied here demand split-second timing, as performers either lip-synch with onscreen images of themselves, engage in dialogue with recorded performers, or move to and fro between stage and screen in a *trompe l’œil* fashion. Performer and performance are to some extent subject to the technology (and without the film-actor’s chance to do another take), and the fear is expressed that performers simply become like Edward Gordon Craig’s *Übermarionetten*, with hitting their marks and lines exactly preventing them from investing their performance with an in-the-moment vitality and spontaneity. This lies partly behind Lawson’s fear that video prevents theatre from ‘being created as we watch’. Behind this lie more complex issues concerning presence and liveness which will be addressed later, but for the moment, I would propose that anyone who witnessed

the virtuosity with which Wooster Group performer Ron Vawter lip-synched through much of *Frank Dell's The Temptation of Saint Antony*, or has seen the hilarious tightrope act of Chris and Tim Britton as they move in and out of the screen in Forkbeard Fantasy shows while still handling the audience like old-time vaudevillians, will be sceptical of the view that using film and video necessarily inhibits the vitality of the performer/audience relationship. (Moreover, such a concern underestimates the extent to which actors in other types of production are constrained by the technical demands of their productions.)

Doubts are also raised over work involving a lot of live relay, as in the work of companies such as The Builders Association and Ex Machina. With the scale and conventions of stage and screen acting being traditionally different, we might expect performers to experience a conflict between what they see as the demands of performing for the camera, for their fellow performers, and for the audience. Also, for the audience itself, there is the question of whether to watch the live performer or the performance framed on the screen. In practice, performers in such work are generally adept at adopting and discarding different performance modes, and the tensions between the live performance and its framed onscreen presentation often become a significant point of focus or source of spectatorial pleasure.

We will see that such adoption and discarding of performance modes frequently characterises more contemporary work, where, in line with much postmodern cultural production, performances often function in an overtly citational fashion. Often the styles and genres cited are cinematic or televisual, with productions and performers playing off spectatorial familiarity with the conventions of popular film genres, soap opera, reality shows, and so on.<sup>13</sup> In these and other ways we will see contemporary intermedial work illustrating Auslander's contention that

the incursion of mediatisation into live performance is not simply a question of the use of certain equipment in that context. It also has to do with approaches to performance and characterisation, and the mobility and meanings of those within a particular cultural context. (Auslander, 1999, 33)

## **Spectatorship and demands on the audience**

The radical shifts described inevitably impact on how spectators view the work and provoke debates about the demands placed on them and the degree of agency afforded them. In contrast with the



camera's eye focus that dominates classic realist cinema, theatre is sometimes seen as allowing spectators a freer rein, as they are able to take in the whole stage picture or any elements of it. In practice, of course, most theatrical productions steer the spectators where the director wishes them to go: blocking, delivery, lighting, and so on, are manipulated to draw attention a certain way. But with intermedial theatre, the practice of presenting multiple, simultaneous images and actions in different media tends to diffuse focus and demand a scanning approach from the spectator. Such work also challenges approaches to theatre that depend upon an audience identifying with actors and their characters. The shifts of medium, genre and style and the approach to performing generally demand a response predicated more on reading the interrelationships between different sources than on empathetic or emotional responses.<sup>14</sup> Such issues and their links with broader debates around liveness and mediation require some detailed discussion.

In some productions potential relationships between the materials may be relatively straightforward. We will see how Piscator, for example, established dialectical relationships between projected materials and onstage performances, and some contemporary work still operates along similar lines. In other work, the relationships may seem more diverse and demand different types of reading by spectators – or may even resist attempts at coherent readings. In *The Builders*



Figure 1 The Builders Association, *Alladeen*

Association's *Alladeen* a wide range of actions, images, information and sounds vie for the spectator's attention as four or five video sources accompany the action. Some supplement onstage action with documentary material or information, some are scenic or atmospheric, some suggest parallels between Aladdin films and the lives of the onstage figures, and some computer-rendered images merge the live performers' faces with those of television performers. Inevitably, comparisons are made with music videos, with multimedia applications for computers, and with the way news programmes show various image boxes and running text displays simultaneously.

Proponents of such multiplicity argue that it reflects contemporary realities and encourages spectators to adopt a more actively productive (and selective) role in responding to the work, as opposed to what they would see as the constraining nature of more 'closed' work. Arguments for the more 'open' productions of postmodern theatre have not gone unchallenged, however. Marco De Marinis, for example, argued that the 'highly indeterminate make-up and loose fixing of reading strategies' of many supposedly 'open' avant-garde performances may in fact be counter-productive, since 'the cooperation asked of an audience ... requires a spectator to possess a range of encyclopaedic, intertextual, and ideological competencies which is anything but standard' (De Marinis, 1987, 104). As will be seen in individual production studies, this fear of indeterminacy shapes some of the negative reactions to intermedial work.

The sort of multiplicity and simultaneity being considered, however, is not confined to intermedial theatre, and arguments around these aspects reflect broader cultural debates. Again in the context of computer-based multimedia, Bolter and Grusin use the term 'hypermediacy' to describe such layering of many different sources of information and imagery beside each other. Hypermediacy parallels the prevalence of collage in much postmodern cultural production, but as Bolter and Grusin point out, it is hardly new: 'As an historical counterpart to the desire for immediacy, the fascination with multiplicity can be found in such diverse forms and media as medieval illuminated manuscripts, Renaissance decorated altarpieces, Dutch painting, Baroque cabinets, and modernist collage and photomontage' (1996, 330). Acknowledging that 'the logic of immediacy has perhaps been dominant in Western representation, at least from the Renaissance until the coming of modernism', they suggest,

Sometimes hypermediacy has adopted a playful or subversive attitude, both acknowledging and undercutting the desire for immediacy. At other times, the

two logics have coexisted, even when the prevailing readings of art history have made it hard to appreciate their coexistence. At the end of the twentieth century, we are in a position to understand hypermediacy as immediacy's opposite number, an alter ego that has never been suppressed fully or for long periods of time. (Ibid., 330)

There has often been a resistance to hypermediacy, particularly from proponents of supposedly transparent art, art which lays claim to an 'immediate' relation between the viewer and the subject of the artwork. As Ovid's 2,000-years-old assertion 'ars est celare artem' ('it is art to conceal artistry') indicates, the counter-contention that immediacy is actually an *effect* of art, an aspiration rather than a reality, is not as new as theorists sometimes imply. By proliferation and play with different media, hypermediatic work draws attention to the fact that art *always* involves mediation of some sort, contrary to Lawson's imagining that true theatre is 'created as we watch'.<sup>15</sup> Bolter and Grusin suggest this potentially critical role through comparing electronic multimedia with photomontage:

When photomonteurs cut up and recombine 'straight' photographs, they discredit the notion that the photograph is drawn by the 'pencil of nature', as Fox Talbot had suggested. Instead, the photographs themselves become elements that human intervention has selected and arranged for artistic purposes. Photographs pasted beside and on top of each other and in the context of other media such as type, painting, or pencil-drawing create a layered effect that we also find in electronic multimedia. (Ibid., 332)

They suggest that, 'in the logic of hypermediacy the artist (or multimedia programmer or web designer) strives to make the viewer acknowledge the medium as a medium and indeed delight in that acknowledgement' (ibid., 334). Much of the theatre considered in this study, beyond making use of electronic media, does in other ways frequently draw attention to, and indeed delight in playing with, theatre as a medium. Companies such as Forced Entertainment and Forkbeard Fantasy continually play with overt disguise and transformation, working with cheap wigs, exaggerated costuming and obvious gender swapping. The performers often adopt very diverse performance styles and performance personae, thereby drawing attention to the act of performance. As with Bolter and Grusin's photomonteurs, the hypermediacy of such productions is then an extension of a more general subversion of notions of immediacy.

Beyond a spurious clinging to immediacy, however, criticism of the multiplicity of sources is also grounded in a more general resistance to what is seen as an overload of information and images in contemporary society, with television and video often castigated as major culprits. Discussion of both postmodernism and television is pervaded by notions of the society of the spectacle, the simulacrum, the disappearance of the referent of the sign, immersion in and seduction by images, and a waning of affect that arises from the proliferation of depthless pastiches of historical imagery, and so on. Television, for which 'the screen must always be filled, the void is not permitted ... a profusion of images is needed' (Baudrillard, 1993, 148) is portrayed as a key producer of 'the noise and jumbled signals, the unimaginable informational garbage, of the new media society' (Jameson, 1991, 80). This is not just because of its culturally dominant place, but because what Raymond Williams described as the total flow of its programming, as it moves between dramas, news, advertisements, comedy and so on, supposedly contributes to the development of undifferentiating spectatorial habits, with critical distance and memory being lost.<sup>16</sup> Modifying Williams's idea of flow, Margaret Morse argues that 'television discourse typically consists of "stacks" of recursive levels which are usually quite different in look and "flavour" ' (Morse, 1998, 114). Suggesting that television works to elide potential ideological contradictions that might emerge from the co-presence of these different stacks, Morse ties television in with the freeway and the shopping mall as major 'institutions of mobile privatisation' in a culture of distraction, a world of simulations and derealisation (*ibid.*, 118).

In such a technological scene, the sort of dialectical montage associated with a critical Brechtian tradition is seen as giving way to 'reified dramaturgies of montage to be found virtually everywhere in cinematic practices, commercial advertising, television programming, exhibitions, sports events, etc' (Birringer, 1991, 171). The challenge then for theatre practitioners and critics becomes not just whether theatre can provide a counter-site to the limitless seduction of the media, but whether spectators saturated by such reified dramaturgies are able to switch viewing modes when confronted by similar stacks of seemingly incommensurable information and imagery in intermedial work. Is it possible to create work that acknowledges and even exploits the prevalence of electronic media, but does not leave its audience either seduced or overwhelmed, deprived of the capacity for critical thought?

Here we should return to issues surrounding the notion of liveness touched on earlier. Accepting Copeland's sceptical view of live

performance functioning *per se* as a vaccination against our exposure to mediatisation, is it possible to argue that live theatre that makes use of media does not just undermine the notion that any theatre is ever ‘immediate’, but can, through ‘staging the screen’, also create opportunities to engage with and critique how media such as film and television function? This is not to assert that intermedial work *automatically* adopts such a resistant role or to suggest it is only worthwhile if it does so (which would simply echo ontological ideas about performance which Auslander and Copeland have critiqued), but to recognise that it may sometimes serve to disrupt the flow or draw attention to the way things are stacked up, in a zone of public rather than privatised reception.

Two issues will be considered here: how the co-presence of media and live performers may serve to put into question the practices and underlying assumptions of the media used, and the way different viewing circumstances and different expectations associated with theatre attendance may in themselves affect the ways spectators view media when they appear in the theatre.

Adapting Jacques Derrida’s discussion of presence to recent American theatre, Elinor Fuchs argues that Derrida’s deconstruction of the notion of presence – the idea that we can ever be fully present to ourselves (or to others), has been matched by theatre practitioners who ‘have begun to expose the normally “occulted” textuality behind the phonocentric fabric of performance’ (1985, 166). Writing, acting and direction in theatre that lies within broadly naturalistic conventions combine to produce a type of identification-based performance in which performer and character are expected to fuse in a single presence: as we watch, we should feel the character is here before us now, uttering these words and doing these actions (and this reinforces the notion that in daily life coherent self-presence is also a possibility). Fuchs suggests, however, that contemporary experimental theatre practitioners expose the textuality that lies behind the creation of such theatrical performances. Fuchs illustrates different tactics employed for signalling the textual origins of what is done or said, including The Wooster Group’s practice in some productions of showing the actors reading from scripts. Such open acknowledgement of textual origins is accompanied by other devices that challenge the performers’ presence, amongst them the use of video, whether showing contrasting actions and texts or footage of the performers themselves (when it often shows a split or doubled image). Such practices challenge the authority normally vested in a text.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, when particular generic conventions and modes of viewing film and television have become so pervasive that they seem 'natural', placing film or video material on the stage often draws attention to the conventions of filming, distribution, presentation and reception that are normally occluded when we watch a film in the cinema or a television programme in our homes. (We should note that most academic discussion of cinema spectatorship tends to assume films are watched in cinemas and most discussions of television viewership tend to assume that it is watched in the privacy of the home, with there being little discussion of how reframing their presentation and viewing may destabilise assumptions about their impact on viewers.) In various ways, companies such as The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment and Forkbeard Fantasy actively defamiliarise the genres they cite or the mechanisms of screening or projection. We will see, for example, how in *Emanuelle Enchanted* Forced Entertainment works over the news programme format and how Forkbeard Fantasy continually plays with the construction and destruction of various types of screen, a practice that, along with the visible presence of an array of projectors on stage, draws attention to the material nature of film and its projection. Their knowing play with film genres also plays off and subverts their power; in the case of *The Barbers of Surreal*, for example, its film prologue plays with conventions for suturing the spectator into the world of thrillers, but then disrupts the trajectory which would normally follow such an opening.

To suggest that intermedial performance may pose such challenges is not to disregard Auslander's and Copeland's scepticism about conventional ontological oppositions between 'live' and 'mediatised' performances. Auslander accepts that we can 'make phenomenological distinctions between the respective experiences of live and mediatised representations, distinctions concerning their respective positions within cultural economy, and ideological distinctions among performed representations in all media' (1999, 51). He warns, however, that such distinctions 'need to derive from careful consideration of how the relationship between the live and the mediatised is articulated in particular cases' (ibid., 54).

Any suggestion that intermedial theatre that engages with mediatisation may function in a resistant manner needs, then, to take account of such distinctions. Subsequent discussion of individual companies will indeed investigate 'the relationship between the live and mediatised in particular cases'. For the moment, however, it may be useful to return briefly to the issue of the spectator's agency. Although Baudrillardian

views of the overwhelming effect of media highlight persuasively the extent to which we are caught up in the circulation of signs that are increasingly without content, leading to the experience of hyperreality, many critics find unconvincing the totally solidifying effect proposed and the evacuation of any possibility of agency that comes from pushing the logic of such a position to the extreme. Here it is useful to consider Elizabeth Klaver's argument that the proliferation of different media and viewing contexts problematises assumptions that have dominated critical discussion of issues such as the television audience or the spectatorial gaze in cinema (Klaver, 1995).

Noting contemporary viewers' exposure to an ever-expanding network of different media, Klaver argues that 'a viewer watching any of the media will be at the crossroads of various media looks and open to a variety of subject positions' and that 'the viewer exerts agency by *performing* in the viewing situation, by bringing a history of media and life experiences to what she is watching' (ibid., 311). She proposes 'a theoretical shift from a passive, monolithic voyeur, who is controlled by the looking structures embedded in a show, to a pluralistic, changing, interactive viewer' (ibid.). In particular, Klaver argues against uncritical application of Laura Mulvey's theories of the male gaze in discussions of cinema and theatre spectatorship and common assumptions about a female televisual viewing situation. Instead of concluding that the increasing cross-fertilisation between different media leads simply to viewers adopting one amorphous, uncritical way of absorbing media representations, Klaver argues that the contemporary spectator has become more critical: 'Given the playful intersections going on among film, theatre and television and the shredding of their boundaries, a viewer not only watches in a variety of media-viewing positions but also sees the deconstructions and alterities of media performing each other' (ibid., 318).

Accepting Klaver's argument for audiences generally possessing more flexible viewing strategies than common monolithic theories suggest, is there also a case for suggesting that the conditions under which spectators encounter the conjunction of electronic media and the 'live' in intermedial performances might also encourage a more active critical viewing than is often deployed in daily encounters with the media? Although it may be a result of cultural conditioning about the relative value of the live and the electronic media or be influenced by a nostalgia for auratic presence (i.e. the meaning and value of 'liveness' is contingent and historical), many spectators do, in practice, place a particular value on attending 'live' performances – even though, as we

have seen, they do involve mediation. Most people in highly industrialised countries have ready access to television, videos and sound recordings. In contrast, to see a live performance, of theatre, live art, or even football or political debate, usually involves some sort of planning: we generally make a special effort to attend the live event at a specified time and place; we journey there specially, pay an entrance fee, buy a programme, and so on. Such performances have a sense of being demarcated off from everyday practices and routines. We tend to view them more attentively than we do most of the media performances we casually encounter in daily life. While we may view a favourite television programme more attentively, much television-viewing takes place in a semi-distracted fashion: we are perhaps chatting with others, having a meal, or channel-hopping. I am suggesting, therefore, that even if we reject an ontological distinction between live theatre and the electronic media and acknowledge that so-called live performances involve mediation, in actual practice, we may often adopt more active spectating strategies towards them. If the viewing conditions encourage more focused attention and greater expectations of them, this further supports the argument that intermedial performances may, through staging the media in a context in which they do not normally appear, offer the opportunity to intervene critically in the flow of media. Instead of seeing such work as inevitably overwhelming or seducing audiences, we might recognise its potential for encouraging more active and critical spectatorship.

### **Aims and structure of this study**

At a time when the combination of video with live performance operates in all sorts of contexts, such as rock concerts, business presentations and political conferences, and when developments in computer technology have led to such hybrid activities as virtual reality theatre on the web, it may seem a little narrow to focus on theatrical productions which incorporate the use of film and/or video. Yet, despite the existence of some broader theoretical discussion of issues surrounding such work, the relative lack of a sense of the history of its development and closer discussion of different companies' particular dramaturgical approaches to incorporating film and/or video has contributed to the way both critics of, and apologists for, such work tend to make sweeping generalisations about its supposed properties, whether these are portrayed as threat or salvation for theatre in the 21st century.



This study is not a manifesto nor does it suggest only this hybrid form holds any future for theatre. It does, however, argue that such work does not signal a defeat of theatre and that it is a futile task to patrol some putative ontological borders between theatre, film and video, driving out supposed invaders of the theatrical space. It accepts that when the media and mediation play such a significant role in our lives, we might expect some theatrical practitioners to acknowledge this in their work, and that the introduction of recorded or recording media into a performance does not automatically render it any less 'created as we watch' than many a long-running theatre production that runs along the same lines night after night. (Neither does it guarantee that the work will be at the cutting edge of thinking about how we might survive and flourish in a world saturated with mediation.)

The book, then, is intended as an introductory (and inevitably incomplete) historical charting of the field, in the course of which various critical issues that arise from particular practices will be touched upon. Chapter 1 traces the early history of how theatre employed film, discussing a range of European experiments that anticipated the activities of Erwin Piscator in the 1920s. It illustrates how the work of Georges Méliès, Jean Painlevé, Sergei Eisenstein and others, along with the more thorough-going practice and theorisation of Piscator, established models for theatre's handling of media that are often broadly applicable to much contemporary work. Three main lines of development emerge in this period. The first is aptly described by Eisenstein's phrase 'theatre of attractions': here film's ability to introduce other characters and places helps create moments of fantasy or transformation, where the collision between the 'real' world of the stage and the 'magic' world of film becomes an attraction in its own right. By contrast, the second approach employs film's apparent capacity to show 'reality' to introduce aspects of the outside world into the 'artificial' world of the stage, often in a didactic manner, as in Piscator's work. The third uses film to suggest something of the subjective experience of onstage characters, as depictions of characters' dreams or fantasies appear or rhetorical devices such as close-ups or flashbacks are employed. Chapter 2's discussion of the work of Czech scenographer Josef Svoboda illustrates how he developed further such approaches in his broader scenographic work for international theatre companies and examines in more detail productions by *Laterna Magika*, the Prague-based theatre company he founded specifically to create productions that fuse theatre and film. Chapter 3 briefly explores how a combination of technological and artistic innovations

in the 1960s laid the foundations for video art and the use of video in intermedial performance art, which in turn influenced how theatre practitioners began to use video.

In contrast with the European and historical focus of the first two chapters, subsequent chapters focus on contemporary North American and British practitioners.<sup>18</sup> With the exception of Forkbeard Fantasy, which has consciously chosen to work with film, most contemporary practitioners work with video. The Wooster Group, under the direction of Elizabeth LeCompte, is often seen as pioneering the regular incorporation of video into theatrical production and has greatly influenced subsequent practice. Chapter 4, therefore, examines in considerable detail the company's path from its relatively simple employment of video in *Route 1 & 9* in 1979 through to its much more complex use in recent productions such as *To You, the Birdie!* (2002), exploring how LeCompte's self-conscious play with the conventions of popular television makes a major contribution to the company's reframing of the classic texts with which it works. The next company studied, in Chapter 5, Britain's Forced Entertainment, was initially influenced by The Wooster Group, but developed its own distinctive approach to working with video in several productions in the late 1980s. While both companies employ devices and tropes found in earlier work with film, it will be seen that the move to video and their use of television monitors accompanies a more self-reflexive handling of the media and exploration of issues to do with representation and mediation. This is developed even further in the work of The Builders Association, founded in 1994 by Marianne Weems and other former associates of The Wooster Group. Chapter 6 illustrates the company's shift from reworking classic texts to devising intermedial spectacles that make striking use of large-scale video projection, including live relay and CGI material, to stage critical investigations of the changing experiences of time, space and identity in an age shaped by the revolutions in communications and information systems over the past half-century. In Chapter 7 film makes a reappearance in the work of Forkbeard Fantasy, whose Surrealist-inspired flights of fancy revivify the 'theatre of attractions' tradition, combining a detailed, yet critical, homage to cinematic history with a satiric take on the ambitions of contemporary science. Science of a different sort, in the shape of quantum theory, seems to have inspired aspects of the work of Station House Opera dealt with in Chapter 8. Taking advantage of the possibilities of life-size projection, like Forkbeard Fantasy, they play a lot with performers moving in and out of the screen, but use the device to

create what might be seen as multiple possible worlds, as what seem to be the dreams and fantasies of the performers intersect with their onstage behaviour in a way that undercuts attempts to draw clear distinctions between the material and immaterial, the real and the virtual. Chapter 9 surveys some of the prolific output of Canadian director/performer Robert Lepage, renowned (and sometimes excoriated) for his eclectic use of video and enthusiasm for technical wizardry, which turns the stage into a magic-box of tricks. While sometimes video functions as primarily another tool in the box, it will be seen that certain underlying themes around displacement and transformation often inform the way in which he deploys video and other technologies.

Rather than being structured around such case-studies, this book might have been structured around a series of issues or topics, with illustrations taken from a wider range of examples. I have taken the present route partly because of my experiences teaching this area. I have found my students more interested in exploring the close development of complete productions and seeing how broader critical and theoretical questions inform their understanding of them, rather than primarily theoretical discussion based on 'cherry-picking' brief illustrative moments from diverse work, usually taken out of context and aimed at buttressing an author's theoretical stance. My hope is that through exploring the diverse paths taken by this range of practitioners a greater understanding of different strategies and purposes for working with film and video in theatre will emerge, along with some sense of the key critical issues. Given that there has been little detailed documentation of much of the work, and given that the dramaturgy of the sort of intermedial work on which I mostly focus involves complex interactions between performance, text, scenography and recorded material, the individual case-studies include quite descriptive analyses. These can never, of course, reconstitute the experience of watching the performances, nor do they attempt this. It is hoped, however, that they convey a sufficient sense of the overall productions to gain some fruitful insights into how film or video functions in them, and that these will feed into a more differentiated understanding of the potential range of ways in which these may be employed in theatre more generally.

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