

## Book Review

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**Teresa Brayshaw and Noel Witts eds., *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). London and New York: Routledge, 2013. 514 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-69664-7 (hbk); 978-0-415-69665-4 (pbk); 978-0-203-12523-6 (ebk).**

For scholars and students of performance study, *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader* has been the most significant introduction to all types of performance since its first publication in 1996. Routledge promoted the second edition of the book as 'the key introductory text to all types of performance' and this enriched third edition, with criticisms and expanded theories of performance, dance, drama, music, theatre and live art by 59 writers – about 20 more entries than the second edition, with some omissions such as Beckett and Barthes – is even more an essential source-book for students and practitioners.

The new additions include articles by Marina Abramovic; Bobby Baker; Joseph Beuys; Jacques Copeau; Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker; Tim Etchells; Karen Finley; Richard Foreman; Guillermo Gómez-Peña; Matthew Goulish; Martha Graham; Wassily Kandinsky; Allan Kaprow; Jacques Lecoq; Hans-Thies Lehmann; George Maciunas; Ariane Mnouchkine; Meredith Monk; Lloyd Newson; Carolee Schneemann; Gertrude Stein; and Bill Viola.

While maintaining the traditional structure that is now very familiar to all scholars – alphabetical organisation of the essays that are supplemented by a contextual summary, detailed cross-references, pointing out ways in which different performance ideas by each practitioner interrelate, and suggestions for further reading – this edition offers contextual notes about each writer and a completely new introduction by one of the

original editors, Noel Witts and a new co-editor for the third edition, Teresa Brayshaw. And among the new writers included are recent practitioners such as Richard Foreman, Robert Lepage and Richard Schechner; a number of essays from the second edition, including that of Roland Barthes, are left out. Though four articles are omitted from the second edition, seventeen essays have been added, with the most recent being 'The Theatre of Gesture and Image' by Jacques Lecoq (2006).

Routledge's claim about being the key introductory text to all types of performance may however not be totally accurate despite containing articles representing all forms of live performance; with the exception of Wole Soyinka and Rustom Bharucha, performance arts and criticism from Africa and the Indian sub-continent are underrepresented. Still, most of the central figures of twentieth-century Western performance are represented: Antonin Artaud, Eugenio Barba, Bertolt Brecht, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Ariane Mnouchkine, Erwin Piscator, Konstantin Stanislavski, Robert Wilson, and Richard Schechner. Nonetheless, the thematic range is wide, from Alfred Jarry's 1896 article 'Of the Futility of the 'Theatrical' in Theatre' to Lecoq's writing which discusses 'the significance of mime and its relationship with dance and its implications for a view of 'total' theatre, where the word is not dominant' (p. 299). The importance of this article is that it highlights the stylised and precise non-Western theatrical traditions.

There are thematic connections and clear relationship between the extracts, however, rather than structure the book thematically or even chronologically, from 1896 onwards, the editors have chosen to organise the texts in alphabetical order to allow readers access 'key writings by twentieth-century performance practitioners' easily, and 'allowing the reader to choose what is most relevant to his/her interests'. But the organisation does not entirely discriminate against historical or chronological perspective, as pointers are inserted with each article detailing the relationship with other articles and its period.

Essential to a Reader, several other features are provided to assist in contextualising the articles. The book begins with a useful section on 'How to Use This Book', a comprehensive 'Introduction' in two parts, by the two editors, proffering an understanding into the methodology of the book, and the articles, each followed by a contextual summary, writer's biography, further readings and relationship to other articles in the book. A chronology of texts is also provided at the end of the book, together with a comprehensive index.

The *Reader* offers a wide-ranging review of forms of performance, noting the importance of new media such as YouTube in disseminating performance ideas and how significant these new forms and modes of

performativity is to Performance Studies. The focus of the essays, and perhaps of the selection, has not changed from an emphasis on the fundamental relationships between performance design, text and the performer's body as well as the space of performance. All the articles, especially Foreman (p. 194) and Soyinka (p. 430), concentrate attention on one or all of the areas. There are also contributions from the world of music (see Stein, p. 450, and Kandinsky, p. 259).

Coming more than ten years after the publication of the second edition in 2002, this third edition is a valuable reference book for scholars, researchers and students of performance or performance related course.