

the sixteenth-century playhouses to the vigorous public debates that underscore the reforms that sought to regulate the nineteenth-century stage.

Taking as point of departure Plato's 'theatocratic metaphor' whereby theatre 'denotes the scandal of democracy itself', this is an ambitious project that carefully develops a complex and robust argument accounting for the multifaceted history of the anti-theatocratic prejudice by the beginning of the twentieth century: it is through the regulation of the modern state, and theatre's acceptance of its 'fundamental responsibility to government, that the long-sought-after recognition' of the stage was realized; it was by embracing the government's deontic power, Fisher continues, that the 'legitimate theatre had earned the "right" . . . to be treated quite differently from common forms of entertainment' – the privilege, that is, to criticize and unsettle the very deontic power that had moulded its subjectivity, thereby claiming its paradoxical autonomy.

Fisher's fascinating discussion unfolds methodically in the three parts of the book: the first part traces the origins of this discourse in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century playhouses; the second explores the importance of the anti-theatocratic metaphor in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century; and the third part examines the governmentalization of the nineteenth-century stage as reflected in various debates and discourses framing theatre's legality, legitimacy, and legibility. Fisher presents his key arguments and extensive research in an accessible and compelling way, enabling the reader to navigate the book's complex conceptual backbone with ease.

This impressive endeavour delivers a remarkable piece of scholarship that is in dialogue with, and contributes to, theatre and performance studies as well as history, philosophy, and politics. Fisher provides not only a new insightful way of looking at the particular histories (of theatre and government), but a valuable methodological approach to the politics and history of the stage.

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Andy Lavender

Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement

London; New York: Routledge, 2016. 236 p. £26.99. ISBN: 978-0-4155-9235-2.

Lavender's monograph begins with an important premise: that performance in the early twenty-first century has moved beyond the tropes of 'classic postmodernism' – such as the 'cool fun' of ironic detachment and the subversive but possibly inconsequential play of contingent meaning – towards a new emphasis on engagement. And

throughout the book he draws a full spectrum of what these new theatres of engagement encompass, spanning forms that engage their audience in the live event through 'co-presence, corporeality, and embodied sensation' to performances that break with the postmodernist credo of the end of history to (re)engage with the movement of history and political reality.

A diverse set of case studies – among others, experimental verbatim performances by Dries Verhoeven, Rabih Mroué, and Rimini Protokoll, immersive performances by dreamthinkspeak, Zecora Ura Theatre and Punchdrunk, as well as non-theatrical performances like technologically mediated sports matches and theme parks – are explored across nine relatively independent essays grouped into five thematic clusters: 'Scenes of Engagement', 'On Mediating Performance', 'On (Not) Being an Actor', 'On (Not) Being a Spectator', and 'Theatre Beyond Theatre'.

Some of the terms that Lavender finds to conceptualize these engaged theatres particularly stand out, such as his notion of the *mise en sensibilité*, a supplement to the *mise en scène* that signals a move from 'scenic presentation to eventual experience'. His coining of transferable analytical terms such as this, coupled with clear, jargon-free prose, make many of the essays in the book excellent materials for teaching contemporary theatre and performance at undergraduate level. An essay on the performer in the age of YouTube videos – 'Me Singing and Dancing: YouTube's Performing Bodies' – which is available as an e-resource on Routledge's home page complete with links to the relevant videos, will thus make a valuable addition to many theatre and performance studies curricula.

A particularly provocative idea that emerges across the book is the suggestion that a process of commercialization and recuperation of radical theatre forms, as well as the attendant theoretical discourses, such as Jacques Rancière's much-cited emancipated spectator, in the context of our current experience economy, is now discernible. When Lavender analyzes how a regular event for high-earning 'city influencers' and 'urbanites' at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago relies on performative techniques of engagement and participation more commonly associated with experimental performance, he warns us that not all engaged spectating is emancipatory. Given this, it is very fitting that the book ends on Banksy's *Dismaland*, an apocalyptic theme park that satirizes our desire for engagement and experience through the use of these very techniques.

In Lavender's reading, engagement is, then, not always radical, resistant, or liberating but a fundamental mode of being in the twenty-first century, making his attention to its delights and pitfalls timely and relevant.

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