Theatre as Voyeurism
Theatre as voyeurism: the pleasures of watching / [edited by] George Rodosthenous, University of Leeds, UK.

Summary: "Theatre as Voyeurism redefines the notion of voyeurism as an 'exchange' between performers and audience members in contemporary theatre and performance. Pleasure (erotic and/or aesthetic) is here privileged as a crucial factor in the way meaning is produced in the encounter with a theatrical work. George Rodosthenous has drawn together an intriguing selection of authors and the ten chapters make a significant contribution to the overarching critical project of assessing the value of approaching theatre through – and as – voyeurism. The authors focus on a range of case studies including specific theatre artists such as Jan Fabre, Romeo Castellucci, Ann Liv Young, Olivier Dubois and Punchdrunk. This edited volume is therefore relevant to prospective readers interested in various aspects of visual experience in the theatre today" —Provided by publisher.

1. Theater audiences—Psychology. 2. Voyeurism. I. Rodosthenous, George, 1973—

PN1590.A9T475 2015
792.01—dc23 2015001214

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.
## Contents

*List of Illustrations*  
vii  

*Acknowledgements*  
viii  

*Notes on Contributors*  
x  

**Introduction: Staring at the Forbidden: Legitimating Voyeurism**  
George Rodosthenous  

**Part I Voyeurism and Directing the Gaze**  

1 Always Looking Back at the Voyeur: Jan Fabre's Extreme Acts on Stage  
Laurens De Vos  

2 The Dramaturgies of the Gaze: Strategies of Vision and Optical Revelations in the Theatre of Romeo Castellucci and Societas Raffaello Sanzio  
Eleni Papalexiou  

**Part II Voyeurism in Space**  

3 Intimacy, Immersion and the Desire to Touch: The Voyeur Within  
David Shearing  

4 In Between the Visible and the Hidden: Modalities of Seeing in Site-Specific Performance  
William McEvoy  

**Part III Voyeurism and Acts of Watching**  

5 The Pleasure of Looking Behind Curtains: Naked Bodies from Titian to Fabre and LeRoy  
Luk Van den Dries  

6 Baring All on Stage: Active Encounters with Voyeurism, Performance Aesthetics and 'Absorbed Acts of Seeing'  
Fiona Bannon
### Part IV  Voyeurism and Exhibiting the Body

7  Thinking Critical/Looking Sexy: A Naked Male Body in Performance  
   Daniël Ploeger  
   147

8  Viewing the Pornographic Theatre: Explicit Voyeurism, Artaud and Ann Liv Young’s *Cinderella*  
   Aaron C. Thomas  
   166

### Part V  Voyeurism and Naked Bodies

9  ‘Music for the Eyes’ in *Hair*: Tracing the History of the Naked Singing Body on Stage  
   Tim Stephenson  
   187

10 *Outlying Islands* as Theatre of Voyeurism: Ornithologists, Naked Bodies and the ‘Pleasure of Peeping’  
    George Rodosthenous  
    211

*Index*  
226
# List of Illustrations

Cover: *Inside* (2011) by Dimitris Papaioannou  
(Photograph: Rene Habermacher)

Intro. 1 *Inside* (2011) by Dimitris Papaioannou  
(Photograph: Rene Habermacher)  

Intro. 2 *Inside* (2011) by Dimitris Papaioannou  
(Photograph: Marilena Stafylidou)

Intro. 3 *Inside* (2011) by Dimitris Papaioannou  
(Photograph: Marilena Stafylidou)

1.1 *I am Blood* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

1.2 *I am Blood* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

1.3 *I am Blood* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

1.4 *I am Blood* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

1.5 *I am Blood* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

1.6 *I am Blood* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

1.7 *History of Tears* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

1.8 *History of Tears* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

3.1 Concentric bubbles of spatial distance  

3.2 The unification of sensory engagement via spatial proxemics  

3.3 Directional spectatorships  

5.1 *Promethean Landscape II* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

5.2 *Low Pieces* by Xavier LeRoy  
(Photograph: Xavier LeRoy)

5.3 *History of Tears* by Jan Fabre  
(Photograph: Wonge Bergmann)

7.1 *SUIT* (2009–10) by Daniël Ploeger  
(Photograph: Giel Louws)

7.2 Sphincter muscle contraction pattern registered in an experimental subject during masturbation and orgasm  
(Bohlen, Held and Sanderson 1980), used in *ELECTRODE*

7.3 *ELECTRODE* performance by Daniël Ploeger in Ostrava, Czech Republic, August 2011  
(Photograph: OCNM Archive / Martin Popelář)
Acknowledgements

My interest in Theatre as Voyeurism has been forming since my appointment at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries of the University of Leeds in 2002. This book project started in 2006 with my work on David Greig’s *Outlying Islands*, which I saw at the Edinburgh Festival in 2002.

I would like to thank Paula Kennedy for believing in this project from the first day I shared my thoughts with her in 2006 and her invaluable support and determination to enable me to publish this book.

Also many thanks to Peter Cary and the editorial team at Palgrave Macmillan for all their help and guidance towards the final steps of the process, the anonymous readers for their constructive feedback and insightful suggestions, and our copy-editor Monica Kendall for her hard work. I am grateful to all the contributors of the volume for their excellent contributions and patience in working together to ensure the smooth publication of this volume.

Special thanks to Professors Jonathan Pitches, Mick Wallis and Chris Baugh for reading drafts of my initial book proposal and chapter on *Outlying Islands*, Susan Daniels, Dr Kara McKechnie, Dr Anna Fenemore, Dr Tony Gardner, Dr Philip Kiszely, Scott Palmer, David Shearing and my mentor Arthur Pritchard for the fruitful discussions on the matter and constant encouragement, all my colleagues and students at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, and the School’s Research Committee for granting me a semester of Study Leave to complete the editing of this volume.

I also need to thank Dr Demetris Zavros, Angela Hadjipanteli, Georgia Solomontos, Varnavas Kyriazis, Marina Maleni, Lea Maleni, Tom Colley, Scott Harris, Ashley Scott Layton, Michael Fentiman, Katerina Papadakou, Sam Newton, Jordan Taylor, Michalis Christodoulou, Stergios Mavrikis, Kitsa Kyriacou, Lauren Garnham, Lucy Loader, Nathaniel Hall, Riccardo Meneghini, Todd Cijunelis, Soula Loucaidou, Kyriacos Karseras, George Z. Georgiou, Anastasia Georgiou, Barney George, Konstantinos Rigos, Michael Measter and all the performers and designers I worked with over the years for their emotional support and development of my directorial practice.

Special thanks go to the members of the TAPRA Performance and the Body group for their feedback on my chapter on *Outlying Islands*, as
well as David Greig for the interview on his compositional processes. Also to Andrew Wyllie, Peter Thomson, Simon Trussler and Dimitris Papaioannou for their help and co-operation.

I owe a lot of gratitude to the photographers Rene Habermacher, Marilena Stafylidou, Wonge Bergmann, Giel Louws, Martin Popelář and Xavier LeRoy who gave me permission to include their wonderful photographs in the volume, as well as all the actors and performers portrayed in them.

I would like to mention especially Dr Duška Radosavljević who has been a persistent and critical sounding board to all my ideas and thoughts about theatre ever since we met. Duška has been, and still is, an unshakable inspirational soul mate and a remarkable academic who has been supporting and enlightening my academic work for nearly two decades.

I would like to thank my sister Marina Rodosthenous for her encouragement and my brother Nektarios Rodosthenous for his assistance in my Introduction. And finally my mother Aphrodite and my late father Andreas who are jointly responsible for my education, upbringing and interest in theatre.
Fiona Bannon is Senior Lecturer in Dance in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries at the University of Leeds, UK. Fiona is founder of Architects of the Invisible, a collective that explores improvisation as collaborative practice in performance. She is Chair of DanceHE, a representative body for dance education and research in higher education. Current research includes the preparation of a manuscript-investigating collaboration as aesthetico-ethical practice in Performance and Dance and forthcoming chapters exploring dance, identity and mental health, ethics and improvisation, and exploring relations through motion.

Laurens De Vos is Assistant Professor in Theatre Studies at the University of Amsterdam, Holland. He obtained his PhD in English drama from Ghent University, Belgium. He has written articles and books on several playwrights such as Sarah Kane, Tom Stoppard, Mark Ravenhill and Samuel Beckett and on the legacy of Antonin Artaud in contemporary theatre. His current research is focused on processes of looking and visuality in the theatre.

William McEvoy is Lecturer in Drama and English at the University of Sussex, UK. He has published essays on site-specific theatre, contemporary British and European directors, and the theatre theory of Hélène Cixous. He is currently working on contemporary British and Irish playwrights and on the writer–director relationship in recent UK theatre. He currently reviews for The Stage newspaper and was formerly chair of The Stage awards for Acting Excellence and lead reviewer for The Stage at the Edinburgh Festival.

Eleni (Elena) Papalexio is a lecturer at the Department of Theatre Studies, University of the Peloponnese, Nafplion, Greece. She has a PhD from the Université de la Sorbonne – Paris IV (Centre de Recherche sur l’Histoire du Théâtre). She is the author of Greek Tragedy on the Modern Stage (2005, in French) and Romeo Castellucci/Societas Raffaello Sanzio: When the Words Turn to Matter (2009, in Greek). She has also written several papers and articles about the modern stage. She was the main researcher of the Research Project ‘Archivio’ (University of Crete, 2012–13) and is now participating as a member of the main research team in the large-scale Research Project ‘Arch: Archival Research and Cultural
Heritage-Aristeia II’ (University of Athens, 2014–15), both concerning the theatre archive of Romeo Castellucci and Societas Raffaello Sanzio.

Daniël Ploeger holds a PhD from the University of Sussex, UK, and is currently Senior Lecturer and Course Leader Performance Arts at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. He is also Principal Investigator of an AHRC-funded arts-science project on digital performance and the politics of electronic waste.

George Rodosthenous is Associate Professor in Theatre Directing at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries of the University of Leeds, UK. He is the Artistic Director of the theatre company Altitude North and also works as a freelance composer/director for the theatre. His research interests are ‘the body in performance’, ‘refining improvisational techniques and compositional practices for performance’, ‘devising pieces with live musical soundscapes as interdisciplinary process’, ‘director as coach’, ‘updating Greek tragedy’ and ‘the British musical’. He is currently editing Contemporary Approaches to Greek Tragedy: Auteurship and Directorial Visions (forthcoming) and The Disney Musical on Stage and Screen: Critical Approaches from ‘Snow White’ to ‘Frozen’ (forthcoming).

David Shearing is a performance artist and academic working across art forms. He has exhibited at various festivals in the UK and presented work internationally. He is Research Associate in Scenography at the University of Leeds (School of Performance and Cultural Industries) where he is conducting research into ‘Audience Immersion and the Experience of Scenography’. His interests span a number of fields, including the integration of hi and low technologies within performance, sound spatialization, environmental design, found spaces, immersive practices and video projection. In 2013 David’s immersive project ‘and it all comes down to this ...’ won the World Stage Design award for Best Installation design. www.davidshearing.com.

Tim Stephenson is Senior Lecturer in Creative and Cultural Industries (Cultural Analysis) at the University of Leeds, UK. Teaching and research are focused on the theory and practice of cultural management across the arts disciplines and the socio-political analysis of the performing arts. Tim trained as a professional musician (percussionist and composer) and maintains an active musical career alongside his academic career.

Aaron C. Thomas is Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Theater, Dartmouth College, USA. He has taught in both the School of Theatre
at Florida State University and the Department of Theater at Dartmouth College. His most recent essay ‘The Queen’s Cell: Fortune and Men’s Eyes and the New Prison Drama’ was published in *Theatre Survey, 55:2.*

**Luk Van den Dries** is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, and freelance dramaturg. Together with Louise Chardon he founded the theatre company AndWhatBesidesDeath. He has written extensively on Flemish theatre and is the author of *Corpus Jan Fabre* (2006).