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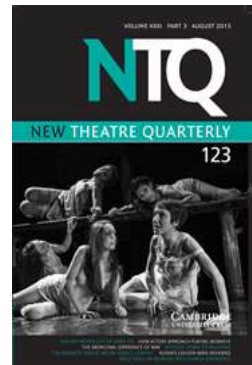
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Josephine Machon *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 344 p. £20.99. ISBN: 978-1-137-01983-7.

William Lewis

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leading experts in the area of Irish theatre research included. The book provides insight into how contemporary academic writing may embrace different perspectives to counteract the concept of forgetting in the current moment. It serves as an excellent addition to the vast field of Irish theatre and performance studies research, and will be of great benefit to anyone with a keen interest in Irish theatre histories and the act of 'remembering' and 're-performing' memory on the Irish stage.

CAROLE QUIGLEY

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Josephine Machon

Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance

Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 344 p. £20.99.
ISBN: 978-1-137-01983-7.

In an age of user-generated content such as blogs, tweets, podcasts, wikis, and social media, have theatre audiences become numb to the mainstream passive spectator model of theatrical engagement? In Josephine Machon's latest book, the answer seems to be 'yes', based on her endeavour to classify an emerging trend in theatrical performance and practice: immersive theatre. She is quick to note however 'that "immersive theatre" is impossible to define as a genre' but deems it necessary to tease apart its make-up in the face of a barrage of words such as 'interactive', 'participatory', and 'experiential', banded about as ways of marketing to audiences looking for a familiar way to engage with art.

The book begins by laying out the base parameters for *immersivity* through a metaphor of submersion in a bathtub where the *immersant* becomes fully engulfed for cerebral and imaginative affect. This is an apt metaphor and presents the simplest way to describe this practice. The book's format invites readers (or users rather) to engage the material in whichever manner best fits their needs. The preface acknowledges the user's agency in experiencing the reading, in much the same way as the theatre practitioners she catalogues and interviews in the book insist on the user being a necessary part of the narrative process.

Following Machon's invitation, I recommend reading this book in a non-linear fashion. First, start with the section after the preface in which Machon briefly introduces you to the artists and companies she covers, including examples of their work. Next, skip to Part Two, where she includes interviews with the likes of Punchdrunk, Artangel, dreamspakthink, and Coney, as well as

other companies and artists little known outside the United Kingdom. This methodology will give you a better grasp of the barrage of references to these companies in Part One, which illustrates her foundational theories of immersive practice. Part One is divided into three sections: presenting definitions for immersion, explaining the scale of *immersivity*, and engaging in dialogue with multiple theories from the likes of Deleuze, Rancière, Eco, Bourriaud, among others, as well as further developing her own theory of (*syn*)aesthetics.

Machon is deft in her acknowledgement that the practices she covers may, to some, fall outside the realm of 'theatre', but her contribution is important, attempting to establish and confirm a new form of theatrical enterprise outside the traditional model of passive spectatorship. The models she encounters each manifest varying degrees of *immersivity*. This book comes at a potential tipping point for those of us who study and practise theatre. In the age of Web 2.0, immersive practice looks forward to a rich style of developing affective storytelling and connection via theatrical performance. At the heart of this book is an assessment of the state of theatre at the outset of an existential crisis, looking for ways to bring its audience back into the fold.

WILLIAM LEWIS

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Christopher Baugh

Theatre, Performance, and Technology: the Development and Transformation of Scenography

Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 308 p. £18.99.
ISBN: 978-1-137-00584-7.

The last decade has seen a burgeoning interest in scenography, both as a set of practices and as a perspective from which to analyze, theorize, and discuss theatre, performance, and wider cultural practices. When first published in 2005 Christopher Baugh's *Theatre, Performance, and Technology* was a key contribution to the discipline, and it is now in a revised second edition. A new subtitle, dropping a reference to the twentieth century, and an additional chapter signal the early twenty-first-century transformation from scenography 'in the service of dramatic literature' to an expanded field that encompasses a great diversity of creative works and cultural activities, as well as new conceptual understandings.

Both chronological and thematic in structure, Baugh takes the reader from the late-nineteenth-century theatre of spectacle, through the subsequent rejections of the past by Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Craig, Appia and Dalcroze, Copeau, Grotowski, Brook, and Svoboda, to the diversity of present-day practices. Baugh examines how