

Chapter 8

Performance analysis

Performance analysis constitutes a central field of study and research for theatre studies. Whether historical or contemporary, performances are what theatre scholars analyse, and they form the one part of theatrical culture that they alone are responsible for. It is the special area of expertise that distinguishes theatre scholars from other disciplines that concern themselves with theatre. For this reason, students will be expected to familiarize themselves with the techniques and methodological problems attendant on analysing performances.

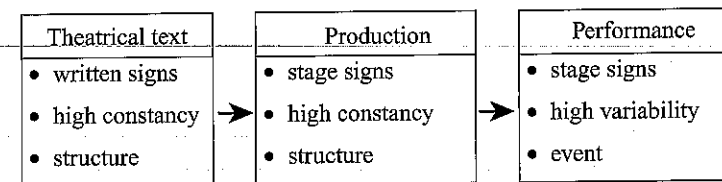
As a first step, it is necessary to differentiate between the two terms 'production' and 'performance', which are often used loosely or even synonymously. As we saw in the previous chapter (p. 127), a play in performance is made up of three discrete levels that in the act of perception are difficult to distinguish: the text, the staging of the text and the performance. The performance is the unique event witnessed. It includes, to a large degree, audience involvement, whether this is manifestly evident or not. Any performance is made up of complex patterns of interaction between stage and auditorium. The performance is therefore characterized by ephemerality; it is transitory and its analysis will tend to emphasize the event and its impact on the spectators at a particular point in time. Because of the extremely complex cognitive, aesthetic, emotional and interpersonal processes that are at work, even during an intellectually undemanding performance, an analysis that seeks to take account of the actual eventness of a performance might be as much sociological or psychological as it is hermeneutical in orientation, and might fall more properly in the realm of audience research (see Chap. 2).

Because of the manifold non-aesthetic dynamics at play during a performance, which most theatre scholars are not trained to analyse in a scientific way, performance analysis tends to concentrate on the level of 'production' or 'staging'. The term 'production' can be ambiguous in English, and refers to the administrative and financial organization as much as to artistic content. Because of this confusion, the term 'staging' or its French equivalent '*mise-en-scène*' are used in theatre studies to refer to the aesthetic structure of a

production or, in semiotic terms, to its arrangement of signs. Throughout this book, the terms 'staging' and '*mise-en-scène*' will be used interchangeably and synonymously. The staging is the result of the artistic endeavour of the director, designers (including lighting and sound) and actors; it is most usually an 'interpretation' of a drama but, as we saw in the previous chapter, need not necessarily be so. The production might equally arise from improvisation and devised work. The object of analysis is therefore, in the first instance, an aesthetic product resulting from an intentional organization of signs.

It must be stressed that this terminological distinction between 'performance' and 'production' is by no means standardized, although most scholars recognize the importance of the differentiation. The generally accepted term is 'performance analysis', even if in most cases production analysis is carried out. This means that the focus is usually on the more-or-less constant features of the production (set, costumes, performance space), whereas the variable aspects, such as changes in a specific actor's performance, are less frequently examined.

Despite the aforementioned terminological slippage, consensus can be found that the following three levels should be distinguished, even though they may be differently labelled.



An artistic team transforms the theatrical text consisting of written language into organized stage signs (the production), which could also be termed, somewhat old-fashionedly, a 'theatrical work of art' (if it indeed aspires to such status). The realization each evening of the production produces an individual performance with its special eventness. Strictly speaking, it is only the performance that is directly accessible to the spectator. At each level, specific dimensions are added, which are difficult to isolate during the performance event. This important distinction presents us with the somewhat paradoxical situation that we can only analyse a production via its performance, which renders only a partial view of the full potentiality of the play in production. In most cases, it is not especially difficult to negotiate between the different levels. Most professional repertory theatres place great emphasis on ensuring the maximum consistency between performances, i.e. in manufacturing realizations of the productions with a minimum of variability. Although theatre

history abounds with anecdotes highlighting the aspect of variability, to over-emphasize this aspect would have severe methodological implications. It would lead to an aesthetics of the aleatory (the moment of chance), which has its own special history in theatre and performance but is still the exception rather than the norm. We speak of and presumably want to study Peter Brook's *Dream*, Peter Stein's *Three Sisters*, Giorgio Strehler's *Tempest*, and so on. To be able to refer to such important and internationally-viewed productions as points of orientation assumes a degree of consistency across the many hundreds of individual performances. Only then is any kind of intersubjective exchange between scholars possible; this itself represents an important precondition for the existence of a discipline. In the final analysis, however, it makes little sense heuristically to insist on a rigid distinction. When we engage in *performance analysis*, we will probably emphasize the *production*, but at the same time include observations on specific examples of audience or acting behaviour witnessed at a given showing.

Some scholars insist on the uniqueness of the individual performance, on its non-repeatability. There are, indeed, some performances that are by definition unique, or that integrate variability into the structure of the event. Early performance art was predicated on the principle of singularity. For example, in his work *Shoot*, the American performance artist Chris Burden had himself shot in the arm by an assistant. The 'event' was photographed and filmed but, understandably perhaps, not repeated. An example for the second category comprising structurally inherent variation would be improvisational theatre. In this type of theatre, text and action are created anew each night. What remains constant is the general format and the types of scenes employed. Such examples remain, however, exceptions. Most productions, even those that belong to the category of postdramatic theatre, reveal a high degree of *consistency*, and can therefore be analysed as 'works' in the sense of having an organized aesthetic structure.

Notation and documentation

Until relatively recently (the last two to three decades), performance analysis was regarded as a practical impossibility because of the difficulties involved in notating the performance. It was one thing to define the performance as theatre studies's central object of research; it was quite another to produce a textual version of the ephemeral stage work for study. It was considered essential to produce, as it were, a 'work' for both mnemotechnical and systematic reasons. Such a need to fix the transient and complex interplay of theatrical signs in

written form was a response to a philological conception, according to which aesthetic objects had to be made available for study in material form. Because it is next to impossible to render a performance in textual form, the whole undertaking of performance analysis was regarded as doomed to failure.

Although notation techniques are well established in dance choreography and also in prompt copies of playscripts, there they fulfil a practical purpose of ensuring repeatability of stage action, and do not represent an autonomous work. Notation in the context of performance analysis is supposed to render a multi-media work of art into textual form. The problem was 'solved' by a combination of technological and academic developments:

- *technological*: the development of accessible video technology meant that theatre performances could be more easily recorded. A video recording can capture myriad details for which written notation would require numerous visits. Video recordings are, however, problematic sources. The camera always produces only a partial view of the action, which can be further distorted and manipulated by post-production editing. Professional television recordings are especially fond of close-ups to simulate a televisual experience to the detriment of other things happening on stage. Nevertheless, for most aspects of staging, video recordings remain the best approximation of the live event, and certainly enable analysis of many aspects of the staging (De Marinis 1985).
- *academic*: the development of video technology during the 1970s was paralleled by the rise of theatre semiotics and its flexible concept of 'text'. Semiotics remains a science devoted to explaining how signs generate meaning and how these meanings are decoded. This meant that semiotics focused its interest on the 'text' of the production, the relatively invariable aspect of performance, that could in fact be reliably captured on videotape and studied.

Despite the availability of video, theatre students should still practice notation in the form of notes made during or immediately after a performance, because it remains an important part of performance analysis. Such notes are an important mnemonic for later analysis, and they represent a record of one's own perception. It is, however, difficult to produce reliable and useful notes from just one visit. The most productive notes are produced after two or more visits to a production.

Recent developments, particularly in the UK, towards practice-as-research have led to an increased awareness of the notation/documentation problem. In this case, students' own work, usually at MA or PhD level, is by necessity the subject of the documentation. The students' own artistic activity must be

made available in other media so that it can be assessed and examined. The new possibilities offered by DVD technology are being used to create complex documentations including video recordings, photographs and written texts, often linked together by hypertext. Notation and documentation are not, however, strictly, the same thing, as notation is usually applied to situations where students are not in control of the artistic production.¹

Tools of analysis

On the basis of the previous theoretical and terminological reflections, we can draw the following provisional conclusions. Performance analysis is carried out usually by drawing on the following sources:

- on the basis of notes made during one or more visits to a performance. If the production is of a play, it can be useful to prepare a prompt copy, where one records important moves, lighting changes and scenographic devices. The aim here is not to produce a meticulous record of all moves and changes in intonation, etc. but to provide a selection of striking differences that point to significant interpretive decisions made by the directorial team. The 'significance' is usually only recognizable on the basis of very good prior knowledge of the text.
- on the basis of a video recording. Here the same criteria pertain as to notation-based analysis. It is important to contextualize and supplement video recordings with other source material such as reviews and photographs.

While notation and video recordings remain the two most important sources for performance analysis, a number of other documents can be included where available. They can be divided into production and reception sources (see Table 5).

Table 5. Tools for performance analysis

Production	Reception
prompt books	performance notes
programmes, outreach materials	theatre reviews
interviews with artists	photographs
set and costume designs	video recordings
rehearsal observations	questionnaires

This list demonstrates that, in some respects, performance analysis, depending on the types of sources used, is very close to theatre historical research (see Chap. 6). From an epistemological viewpoint, the two activities are very closely allied, even analogous, as Erika Fischer-Lichte has argued (Fischer-Lichte 1994). In a strict sense, every performance analysis writes about a past event that could be termed 'historical'. In practice, of course, the questions and hypotheses that we pose in relation to contemporary or near-contemporary productions will be different to those relating to a production of, say, Vsevolod Meyerhold or Max Reinhardt.

If we look more closely at the types of sources, it is difficult and not even fruitful to establish a hierarchy beforehand. The relative importance of the sources utilized is determined first and foremost by the questions or hypotheses being asked of the production (see the analytical steps below). In most cases, however, direct observation (and the notes resulting thereof), in combination with a video recording where available, constitute the best sources. Because there are different types of video recordings – they range from short demos or archival tapes produced by the theatres themselves to professional multi-camera productions for television – they can be regarded either as production or reception documents. For elements of staging such as movement, proxemics (the distances between bodies) and gesture, a video recording is almost essential.

Production-related documents and sources

The prompt book, acting edition, or director's copy of the text can be very useful for clarifying questions of detail. Although there is seldom standardization of notation used in such texts, and they are very seldom published, they almost always exist and contain information on blocking, sound and lighting cues. Such texts also indicate cuts to or rearrangements of the text that demonstrate crucial interpretive decisions by the production team regarding characterization, narrative and the directorial concept in general.

Programmes are another source available for performance analysis. Their analytical value is disputed, however, and highly dependent on the information contained. Apart from cast lists and advertising, programmes sometimes include statements by the production team. With the growing importance of dramaturgy, outreach, audience development and education, programmes, education packs and similar publications have become important mouthpieces for the concept of a production. What used to be called the 'director's note' is being replaced by essays, associative images and interviews with the cast and team. As sources, programmes are, of course, highly mediated. They probably

convey the conception of the production intended by the directorial team, and their use and interpretation must be measured against other sources.

Interviews with artists and technical staff associated with the production can also produce much useful information illuminating production-relevant aspects. They are particularly important for analyses concerned with the processual elements of a production (its genesis and development).

Set and costume designs often provide the most immediate indication of the directorial concept. They are usually conceived in close collaboration between set and costume designers, often even by the same person. Set and costume may anchor the production – especially of a classical text – in a particular time and place, or conversely seek to deliberately obscure such direct references. Because of their visual and relatively immutable nature, semiotics offers a very useful and precise method for analysing such references (see Chap. 5).

Rehearsal observations can provide illuminating insights into a production concept, especially its evolution, although they cannot be taken for granted. Rehearsals are a complex and often intimate process where non-participants are not always welcome. The observer at rehearsals becomes a kind of participant-observer in an ethnographical sense, and should therefore be prepared to invest considerable time. In recent developments towards practice-as-research, the rehearsal process is a crucial aspect of the production, and is documented in considerable detail. Here, artist and researcher are often one and the same person. For an example of an extended rehearsal process observation, see David Selbourne's account of Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* production for the Royal Shakespeare Company (Selbourne 1982).

Reception-oriented documents and sources

Reception-oriented documents and sources can be divided into two categories:

- (1) documents produced by the student, either in the form of notes made during the performance or systematic enquiries such as questionnaires (see below)
- (2) documents made by others such as reviews, web blogs, etc.

Performance notes are the impressions jotted down either during or immediately after the performance. They are especially important if there is no video recording available, as it is exceptionally difficult to memorize the plethora of impressions generated by any theatre performance for a long period. Such notes are by definition highly subjective, but this is no different to responses generated by any other aesthetic object, except that the transient nature of theatre demands – more than, say, a poem or painting – that these responses

be fixed in some way. It is especially useful to note important proxemic relationships (the spatial distances between bodies on stage), as these are perhaps the most ephemeral of the signs generated by a performance.

Theatre reviews are important for a number of reasons. They provide an important point of comparison with one's own perception and observation. What does the professional critic see (or not)? Reviews are most useful when several can be studied for comparative purposes. Sometimes strikingly different opinions and readings are articulated. In such cases, the task of analysis is not to choose the 'right' one but to discuss why a production or certain scene might give occasion for such dissent. Most critics do not engage self-reflexively with their own judgements and opinions in the sense that they do not question their own premises. Although reviews are by definition somewhat tendentious, they can serve as a point of departure, often in disagreement, for one's own hypotheses.

Production photographs belong to what Patrice Pavis terms 'supplementary documents' (Pavis 2003: 40). Depending on how they are used, they can be both productive and problematic. They are useful in as much as they make accessible for study visual aspects of a production such as set design and costumes, as well as certain physical aspects of gesture, facial expression and, of course, masks, if used. The problematic nature of photographs resides in their own aesthetic qualities. A good professional photographer will not attempt to merely 'document' a production but to produce images that are themselves products of an artistic process. Although the medium-specific aesthetic strategies of such photographs do not automatically diminish their documentary value, it must be remembered that theatre photos are produced for any number of reasons – most importantly advertising – but certainly not to serve the purpose of performance analysis.

The same circumspection required for analysing photographs should also be applied to video recordings. As mentioned above, it is important to distinguish between tapes made by the theatres themselves for archival and documentary purposes (for restaging productions, for example) and professional recordings made for television or as commercial DVDs. The latter can be divided into three subcategories depending on the degree of adaptation:

- (1) live recordings during a performance
- (2) studio recordings
- (3) adaptations by the director or choreographer for film or television.

The three forms represent different degrees of distance from the original theatre production, which must be reflected in the analysis. When examining video recordings, it is crucial to be aware that they are not just *documents* of a performance but *monuments* in their own right, i.e. autonomous artistic

products with special qualities not present in the theatre production (see De Marinis 1985 for the distinction between documents and monuments). Video recordings, depending on their type, always mediate the original performance, and the difference between recording and original must also be taken into consideration.

The rapid development of digital technology has created improved possibilities for recording performances. In comparison to the older VHS technology, digital video cameras provide an inexpensive way to capture performances and furthermore to edit the material on a computer. Independent theatre groups especially are required to produce demo DVDs for festivals and other venues as well as full-length documentations of productions. This material provides, of course, potential source documents for students and scholars. More recently, some groups have even begun to produce DVDs with the special features employed in Hollywood films such as directors' comments, multiple angle shots, extra material and so on.²

Questionnaires, otherwise known as systematic audience surveys, can also be used for performance analysis, especially when they are combined with more hermeneutic interpretations as discussed in Chap. 2 (see p. 45). In the late 1980s, scholars began to develop questionnaires to help students structure their impressions immediately after attending a performance. In his study of performance analysis, Patrice Pavis reviews three different questionnaires, including his own. The latter, first published in 1988, has been translated into several languages and is regularly revised by the author. A slightly abridged version is reproduced here.

Questionnaire for performance analysis (after Pavis 2003: 37–40)

- (1) General characteristics of the *mise-en-scène*
 - (a) What holds the elements of the performance together (relationship between systems of staging)?
 - (b) What are the contradictions or coherencies between the text and *mise-en-scène*?
 - (c) Can you identify general aesthetic principles?
 - (d) What disturbs you about this production? Which moments are strong, weak, boring?
- (2) Scenography
 - (a) Relationship between audience space and acting space
 - (b) Systems of colours, forms, materials and their connotations
 - (c) Principles of structuring/organizing space
 - (i) Dramaturgical function of the stage space and its occupation
 - (ii) Relationship between on-stage and off-stage

- (iii) Connections between the space utilized and the fiction of the dramatic text
- (iv) Relationship between what is shown and what is concealed
- (v) How does the scenography evolve? To what do its transformations correspond?
- (3) Lighting system: nature, connections to space and actors
- (4) Objects: nature, function, relationship to space and body
- (5) Costumes, makeup, masks: function, system, relationship to body
- (6) Actors' performances
 - (a) Physical description of the actors (movements, facial expression, changes in appearance)
 - (b) Construction of character: actor/role relationship
 - (c) Voice: qualities, effects produced, diction
 - (d) Status of the performer: past, professional situation
- (7) Function of music, noise, silence
- (8) Rhythm of the performance
 - (a) rhythm of various signifying systems (dialogue, lighting, systems of gesture)
 - (b) Overall rhythm of the performance: continuous or discontinuous; connection with *mise-en-scène*
- (9) Reading the plot through the *mise-en-scène*
 - (a) What story is being told? Summarize it: Does the *mise-en-scène* recount the same story as the text?
 - (b) What are the dramaturgical choices? Coherence or incoherence of reading?
 - (c) What are the ambiguities in the story and how are they clarified in the *mise-en-scène*?
 - (d) What is the genre of the dramatic text according to this *mise-en-scène*?
- (10) The text in performance
 - (a) Choice of version for staging: what are the modifications? Translations?
 - (b) Role given to the dramatic text in the *mise-en-scène*?
- (11) The spectator
 - (a) Within what theatre institution does the production take place?
 - (b) What expectations did you have of the performance (text, director, actors)?
 - (c) How did the audience react?
- (12) How to record and remember the performance
 - (a) What escapes notation?
 - (b) What images do you remember?
- (13) What cannot be put into signs and meaning (semiotized)?

In comparison to sociologically oriented questionnaires that aim to gauge spectators' reactions and impressions or to gather demographic statistics, this one is intended to help students of theatre studies notate their reactions to a performance. The order of the questions corresponds broadly to the way

we experience a performance aesthetically, i.e. the oscillation between making sense of the overall meaning (the question of the 'directorial concept') and decoding smaller units of meaning (a particular costume, gesture, etc.). Pavis points out that this and all such questionnaires provide only outlines and guidelines with which to focus and structure our viewing. It should help us to pay attention to aspects of a production that may otherwise escape our notice. With repeated usage, it should ultimately help students to expand their awareness for the ways performances generate meaning and function aesthetically. Above all, it should be seen as a tool and not as the goal of analysis; it provides a means to an end and not the end in itself.

Goal of analysis

What is, then, the point of analysis? If we take the word 'analysis' literally, then we mean the examination of something by breaking it down into its constituent parts. If we 'analyse' a sentence grammatically, we are looking at the way the different elements fit together to produce meaning. If we analyse a poem, we are taught to identify key images, metaphors, conceits, etc. as a means to making sense of the poem as a whole. Any form of analysis will try and relate parts to the whole, assuming that the whole is not fully comprehensible without an understanding of its constituent parts, and vice versa.

How does one analyse a performance? There is, of course, no single answer to this question. In a sense, each production will throw up different questions, which the analysis must address. First of all, we can make distinctions between three broad approaches:

- (1) *process-oriented* analysis focuses on the way a production is created, and tends to have a strong social-science or cultural studies bias. Here, we would be looking at the genesis of a production: the interaction of the team as they create the *mise-en-scène*. In this kind of approach, first-hand observation and interviews will play a more important role than decoding signs from the spectator position. The cinematic equivalents of this type of analysis are the popular 'making of' films available on DVDs, where, in the better examples, director, designers and cinematographers explain how they arrived at a particular style or artistic decision. The fact that the majority of artists, cinematic or theatrical, will emphasize 'truth' as the ultimate category of intuition marks the limits of these kinds of interpretations. Process-oriented analysis will often follow a production as it changes over time, especially if it is performed in different cultural contexts. Examples of this approach can be found in Harvie (2002), on

a production by DV8 Physical Theatre, and Balme (1993), an analysis of Giorgio Strehler's *Faust* project.

- (2) *product-oriented* analysis focuses as a rule on aesthetic questions from the same perspective as the normal spectator, without the help of inside knowledge. It regards the production as a finished aesthetic product, and the analytical terminology will probably make use of semiotics to some degree.
- (3) *event-oriented* analysis emphasizes the process of the performance on a particular night; it will focus on interaction between auditorium and stage, and is particularly interested in the contributing factors leading to variations between performances.

These methods are, of course, by no means mutually exclusive. Analyses can integrate all three approaches, although usually one or the other will dominate.

Methods and models

In the face of such diversity, the next important question is to determine which methods and steps should be applied. It is clear that the student must be aware of basic choices at his or her disposal. Although there are few recipes or models, we can initially distinguish two general approaches, which we can call *transformational* and *structural* analysis.

Transformational analysis proceeds from the text to performance. It begins with an analysis of the text and attempts to compare the choices made in a particular production with the options the text would seem to provide. A detailed example of this approach can be found in Chap. 9 of Aston and Savona (1991). *Structural analysis* is followed in Pavis (2003) and Fischer-Lichte (1992). It proceeds invariably from a selection of a particular signifying system or level of segmentation such as character, plot and space. Whereas transformational analysis tends to follow the narrative line of the text, Fischer-Lichte proposes for structural analysis a more flexible approach. Neither the choice of signifying system nor the point in time is predetermined: 'it is completely arbitrary which step is taken first and which element of the text is then chosen for examination' (Fischer-Lichte 1992: 246). According to this method, one could select the text as a point of departure, but this is by no means assumed. Fischer-Lichte argues that one should try and follow the way a particular performance arranges the signifying systems. Pavis is more prescriptive in his structural approach. He states unequivocally: 'Performance analysis should begin with the description of the actor; for the actor is at the center of the *mise-en-scène* and tends to be the focal point drawing together the elements of a production' (Pavis 2003: 55). This may indeed be the case in most productions, but there are always

exceptions to confirm the rule, so the Fischer-Lichte argument for flexibility would seem to be the more circumspect one.

Table 6 provides a schematic illustration of the two different approaches. The following points should be noted. It is not intended that the one approach be contrasted in evaluative terms, i.e. as superior to the other, but primarily to illustrate the different analytical steps that could or should be taken when applying one or the other. Aston and Savona (1991) provide a transformational analysis of two film versions of Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. The first version, directed by Donald McWhinnie and featuring Patrick Magee, was first staged in 1958 but not filmed until 1972. The second version was a videotaped version directed by Alan Schneider for television in 1971, with Jack McGowran in the title role.

If we look at the preparatory steps of both methods, we see very clear differences. Transformational analysis proceeds from an analysis of the text. Very often it will consult literary criticism and scholarly research in order to frame the questions with which to approach the production. Structural analysis, on the other hand, tends to emphasize a set of procedures – the choice and ordering of sign systems – rather than an interpretation derived from the text. The work of a director like Robert Wilson highlights the limitations of transformational analysis. Even when directing a canonical text such as *King Lear*, Wilson's point of departure is not an interpretation of the text. Rather, he would appear to bring to it a predetermined artistic practice. Wilson's *Lear* is rather an addition to Wilson's oeuvre; any analysis of it must take into account this characteristic of Wilson's productions. In this respect, it is a quintessentially intertextual staging situated in the aesthetics of postdramatic theatre.

In this and the previous chapter, we have discussed the term 'postdramatic theatre', where performances usually do not proceed from a pre-existing dramatic text but meaning that new works are usually created using a collaborative working method known as 'devised performance'. Although the term 'post-dramatic theatre' encompasses a broad range of work going back to the 1970s and is largely coterminous in the early period with performance art, now it is a much broader phenomenon. From the point of view of analysis, such performances, Lehmann argues, defy semiotic interpretation because they emphasize evanescent qualities such as energy, presence and, very often, the spectators' reactions. They aim to elicit responses beyond the intellectual and which are thereby often difficult to verbalize. They explore the realms of performance that cannot be semiotized, i.e. translated into signs. Very often, postdramatic performances challenge the fine line between reality and fiction and, in the work of Jan Fabre for example, test how much reality the spectator can bear. Time becomes an aesthetic experience in itself when Marina Abramovic, in her

Table 6. Models of performance analysis: dramatic theatre

Transformational analysis	Structural analysis
<i>Krapp's Last Tape</i> by Samuel Beckett. Royal Court Theatre 1958, Director: Donald McWhinnie; film version 1965, Director: Alan Schneider. Source: Aston and Savona (1991: 162–77)	<i>King Lear</i> by William Shakespeare. Frankfurt 1990, Director Robert Wilson. Source: Fischer-Lichte (1997)
(1) Preparatory steps	(1) Preparatory steps
(a) analysis of dramatic text to identify points of focus	(a) discussion of earlier Wilson productions
(b) emphasis on disjunction and undermining of habitualized reading strategies	(b) remarks on Wilson's refusal to interpret
(2) Analysis	(2) Analysis
(a) space	(a) structure of production: description of opening scene; use of leitmotif
(b) objects	(b) space
(c) actors	(c) figures: costumes, gesture, diction, arrangements
(d) cinematic aspects	
(3) Results: demonstrates how film adaptation applies Beckett's strategies of destabilization of theatrical and dramatic conventions to cinematic viewer	(3) Results
	(a) performance as kind of rite of passage
	(b) alters perception of time and space
	(c) link to avantgarde traditions
	(d) production is a variation on the theme of life and death but does attempt a particular 'reading' of the play

performance *Lips of Thomas* (1995), lies naked and bleeding on a cross made of melting ice after cutting herself by breaking a glass filled with red wine, or when Forced Entertainment invites spectators to participate in the six-hour performance *Quizoola* (1996), to say nothing of their twenty-four-hour *Who Can Sing a Song to Unfrighten Me?* (1999). Clearly, there are many other things happening in such performances besides the experience of time, but the experiential rather than semantic quality of temporality is crucial. When

the performers in Jan Fabre's work *History of Tears* (2005) actually pass water on stage, we are invited, perhaps, to think semantically about the significance of water for our body and mankind, but more probably we are challenged viscerally by the public exhibition on stage of an act normally reserved for private or public lavatories.

Postdramatic performance is exceptionally diverse in its themes, devices, spaces and use of language. It may be text-heavy or entirely non-verbal, low-tech or employ complex digital technology. In terms of analysis, neither transformational nor structural approaches are applicable. For the former, there is usually no script from which to work, and most postdramatic performance is enacted only by the creator(s). Structural analysis may prove too limiting because the performance may be less about the 'structure of signs' on stage than about spectatorial experience of space or experiential confrontation with a bleeding or urinating body. For these reasons, it is not possible to establish a fixed structure of steps. Each work will require a different approach; it will probably demand a different theoretical framework, and may require an emphasis on the text, the space, the performers' bodies, the media technology employed (see Chap. 12) and so on.

Further reading

Despite the importance of performance analysis, the number of books in English devoted to the subject is actually very small. Pavis (2003) remains the most thorough treatment to date, although it is not ideal as a first introduction to the subject. It represents the summation of twenty years' thinking and writing by one of theatre studies's most influential scholars. Part 2 of Fischer-Lichte (1992) presents a systematic introduction to and application of theatre semiotics as a method of performance analysis. The German original was first published in 1983, so some of the semiotic terminology is now clearly dated. The article cited above (Fischer-Lichte 1997) gives a better and more pragmatic idea of how semiotic performance analysis works in action. Part 2 of Aston and Savona (1991) provides a less technical and more accessible introduction to semiotic performance analysis. Martin and Sauter (1997) provides a thorough discussion of many theoretical issues, and offers six analyses, one of which (Fischer-Lichte 1997) is referred to in this book (p. 145). The journal *Theatre Research International* (*TRI*) has published two special issues on performance analysis: 22(1) (Spring 1997) and 25(1) (Spring 2000). Since 2002, *TRI* publishes performance analyses in each issue.

Chapter 9

Music theatre

In this and the next chapter, we shall apply some of the principles discussed in the previous chapters to music and dance theatre. From the perspective of traditional dramatic theatre, we may be entering *terra incognita*. Yet, gradually, there is an increasing awareness that these aspects of theatre should be integrated into theatre studies, as we emphasized in the introduction. This broadening of perspectives is especially urgent in light of the challenges posed by postdramatic theatre forms, which often cross traditional genre boundaries. The following pages will outline a number of points of contact – author, text, theatrical context, staging – that have already been discussed in reference to dramatic theatre.

Elements

As pointed out in the introduction (see p. 5), the term 'music theatre' is used here to refer to three main theatrical genres: opera, operetta and musical. From a theatre studies perspective, the analysis of these genres poses the same set of problems as any other kind of theatrical text, except that the musical 'track' (the score) adds an extra expressive dimension, and with it an additional degree of complexity. In music theatre, we find the same basic division between a written text (the score and libretto) and the staged work. We also encounter the same initial questions: what 'work' are we talking about: the text or the production? How can the relationship between the work and the production be grasped analytically? We shall begin by approaching the two levels – text and staging – separately, in order to point out particular features specific to music theatre.

Like dramatic theatre, the textual level of music theatre (the score and the libretto) is historically a problematic one. The operas that have entered the canon are often the product of many factors. Exigencies of genre, changing authorial status and theatrical conventions have worked together and against