Introduction

Over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the director has come to be identified as a significant creative figure in European and North American theatre. Indeed, in festival, experimental and off-Broadway theatres, as well as in countries such as Germany, it can be argued that audiences are drawn to productions more by the name of the director than by the name of the author or the title of the play itself, or even by star actors. And it is to directors that the development of modern theatre can be traced in its varying manifestations. This book is a response to the emergence of such a vital artistic force, which makes it important to understand how the interrelationships now work between the different creative elements of the theatrical art, and what the guiding principles are, or how the contemporary stylistic forms are produced.

The function and position of the contemporary, twenty-first-century theatre director emerged (as discussed in Chapter 2 of this book) from the actor-manager of the nineteenth century and the pioneering endeavours, primarily in Europe, of Ludwig Chronegk at the Meiningen and Konstantin Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre. Other major figures in the first half of the twentieth century, from Max Reinhardt and Edward Gordon Craig to Bertolt Brecht, contributed, equally, to the transformations that are integral to modern directing. From these rich beginnings, numerous variations on the role of the director and how this person directs have followed, giving rise to complex interconnections of practice and thought in the making of theatre. The director has become an artistic figure in his or her own right: a figure who is not necessarily a manager or administrator, or an actor, nor one beholden to playwrights.

Already, in the opening decade of the twentieth century, Stanislavsky had insisted that the theatre was not literature, a conviction endorsed by Vsevolod Meyerhold through his highly stylized, theatricalized means, and reiterated in numerous different ways through the work of contemporary directors – in Germany, for instance, by Frank Castorf and Thomas Ostermeier. Yet Stanislavsky also notably collaborated with Chekhov, Meyerhold with Alexander Blok and Vladimir Mayakovsky, while others have also collaborated with writers who do not claim to be dramatists, like McBurney with the art

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critic, painter and novelist John Berger. Then, too, there are director-playwrights like Brecht and director-scriptwriters like Robert Wilson or Robert Lepage. Indeed, theatre *auteurs*, the subject of Chapter 5, not only create their own scripts, and design sets, costumes and accessories – the case of Robert Wilson and Lepage (and Wilson is a superlative light designer, as well) – but also at times perform in their own shows.

Examples of *auteur*-directors open up authorship questions of another kind, notably to do with group devising, examined in Chapter 7. Such groups devise verbal as well as physical and musical 'texts' or 'scores' and thus are what might be called performance authors, although co-authorship is far from a matter of 'writing' only with words, as this book amply demonstrates. As traced in the discussion of ensemble directing (Chapter 6), actors too are co-authors of productions with their bodies when they invent material *with* directors, some of which can also be dialogue. Such is the case of the Théâtre du Soleil with Ariane Mnouchkine, the Maly Drama Theatre of St Petersburg with Lev Dodin, Théâtre de Complicité (now known simply as Complicite) with Simon McBurney, and The Wooster Group with Elizabeth LeCompte. But the main point, regarding directors, is that no matter how many and varied their tasks may be, and how they may multi-task and come to dominate productions with their energy, directors' activities identify who directors are and what they do, specifically, when they work together with others. Directors cannot work alone. A solo director can only be, in fact, a solo performer.

While analysing the significance and influence of key innovators in the earlier part of the twentieth century – such as Stanislavsky, Meyerhold or Brecht, each identified with a different approach: the rehearsal processes for psychological realism (Chapter 2); pronounced theatricality and physical training (Chapter 3); epic-political staging (Chapter 4) – our main emphasis is on contemporary twenty-first-century directing. Following the historical overview, every chapter leads to the most contemporary examples of the particular trend or approach focused on there; and even though this is by no means a 'How-to' book for prospective directors, we intend its details of the working methods of directors, and especially of those elaborated by contemporary directors, to be inspirational for theatre professionals, students and general theatre-goers. We analyse the different forms and styles of theatre that twentieth-century directors have created, profiling specific productions to give their achievements concrete dimensions. Similarly, we consider the artistic, social and political implications of directors' work – which is not exclusively about directing – their approaches to actor training that, in several instances, is fundamental to their directorial work (demonstrated in the different approaches of Dodin, Anatoli Vassiliev, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba),

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their rehearsal methods, their interaction with actors and their relation to spectators (exemplified contrastingly by Erwin Piscator, Peter Brook and Peter Sellars, among others). Several examples show the versatility of directors who stage opera, together with the challenges and opportunities of working within such a highly stylized form, while others focus on the genre of song theatre that, in part, grew out of Grotowski's research during what he termed the 'post-theatrical epoch'.

The area of directing is vast, and, in order to organize it, we have observed its variations, innovations and, in some cases, quite marked departures from established or even newly discovered practices. By noting these patterns, we reveal lines of directing that thread their way, whether through perceivable influence or in zigzags, across time and space and cultures. We have grouped directors along or in relation to these lines, giving them definition, as an etching might give definition, not because they sit attractively in the picture that takes shape overall, but because their distinctive characteristics are thrown into relief, acquiring strength from their 'place' in it. Lineages have developed over the past century, some indirectly, like the links between Craig, Norman Bel Geddes and Wilson. Others, which usually involve small performance groups, have more direct connections – the case of Gardzienice, Song of the Goat and Teatr ZAR, whose heritage comes from Grotowski. These latter groups speak of 'leaders' rather than 'directors', and their shift in vocabulary indicates, among other things, the paradoxical nature of collective improvisation that is finally orchestrated by one person. Certain types of ensemble theatre, several of which feature in this book, experience this same paradox, responding differently to it.

The patterns we have traced out show knots of interconnections, which means that a director whom we have grouped in one way belongs just as readily in another grouping: this is the case, noticeably, of Brook who appears in various chapters. Yet others could just as easily have crisscrossed our organization, not least Mnouchkine or Brecht, who are founders of ensemble theatres and could have figured in Chapter 6 as well as under the labels of 'theatricality' or 'epic' directing. In their case, as in several similar cases, we have grouped according to their predominant directorial principles.

What this wonderful tapestry of threads and knots shows is that not only discerning the coherent patterns of directors and directing is difficult, but so, too, is writing a history of directing, which, in some respects, we have also done. This has meant delving into the 'pre-history', if we may call it such, of the modern director, to which Chapter 1 is devoted. It has also meant remembering our *Directors/Directing: Conversations on Theatre* (2009), which, since it records the thoughts of living directors about their work,

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offers highly relevant documentation. As such, it contributes both to an understanding of the practical processes of directing in the present and to the history of directing as it may become in the future. Since the present book was conceived in tandem with *Directors/Directing*, it was logical that we should include those directors in it.

This book necessarily embraces more directors than the ones selected previously. However, quite a number of international figures have too few pages devoted to them, while others are merely referred to in passing. Of the latter, Krystian Lupa, key to the current high profile of Polish directors on the international stage, comes immediately to mind. Of the former, the Lithuanian Eimuntas Nekrosius and Oskaras Korsunovas (while discussed in terms of the political aspects of theatricality) deserve greater attention for their novel, surrealistic approaches, which have won them considerable reputations in Europe, spearheaded by resounding success in France, Italy and Germany. And then there are other innovative directors, some emerging in the international arena while others are already prominent, who are not named at all, but who were in our consciousness as we wrote.

In fact, the subject of Eastern European directors (described here by geographic location, certainly not in political terms) would make a book in its own right. So, too, would the missing link of this book, which is Asian theatre. Unfortunately, we have had to exclude a whole array of major Asian directors known across the world. The reasons are multiple. First, our task to unearth the roots of the modern director necessitated a European focus. Second, a mere acknowledgement of the names of Asian directors would have been nothing but lip service, or, worse still, a gesture towards the ultimately insulting 'politically correct'. Third, but not last, it would have been absolutely necessary to contextualize these directors: to show how, on the one hand, their modern perspectives are juxtaposed against their countries' centuries-old performance traditions and how, on the other, they have made methods developed in Europe uniquely their own, or have invented performance styles from which directors both in Europe and elsewhere are learning. Very often, this fruitful appropriation has generated a cross-cultural interpenetration of Asian and European ways of working, together with their artistic forms.

The type of contextualization outlined briefly here would have been indispensable for such directors of the past as Huang Zuolin, who was deeply inspired by Mikhaïl Chekhov (with whom he studied in the 1930s), Stanislavsky and Brecht, and who is possibly the most influential director on modern Chinese theatre. Looking at the past, a similar kind of contextualization would have been essential, for example, for the Bengali director Sombhu Mitra, who staged Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in the later 1950s. And only by means

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of intricate contextualization would it have been possible to do justice to such remarkable living directors as Yukio Ninagawa from Japan, or Oh Tae-Suk from Korea. Both explore their own cultural traditions in making modern Japanese and Korean theatre. The constraints of publishing have prohibited, here, anything like an adequate treatment of these figures, who are part of the world dynamics of directing.

Our study is, as it says, an Introduction to Theatre Directing, and it could not hope to be fully comprehensive from whichever point of view we took. In grouping the way we have, and in providing concrete details of many kinds – practical, aesthetic, theoretical, historical – our intention was to provide various vantage points from which our readers could begin their journey. It is they who must now take over and forge their own paths through the enormous, beautiful terrain fashioned by directors, directing.

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