



Teaching Postdramatic Theatre

Anxieties, Aporias
and Disclosures

Glenn D'Cruz



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PREFACE

After teaching theatre, drama and performance studies for almost 30 years, I am now, more than ever, acutely aware of the gap between the academic vocabularies I use to teach theatre practice and those my students employ to make sense of the same phenomenon. Perhaps this is a consequence of growing older and realising we no longer share common cultural referents. Then again, this generational anxiety about terminology may have more to do with a personal disposition than any general, quantifiable cultural condition. No doubt, readers of this book will form their own opinions about the extent to which my observations and arguments apply to their contexts.

I first studied theatre in the 1980s. Although my desire to become an actor inspired my interest in the field, the critical theories popular in this era seduced me. Theatre scholars commonly cited philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault and frequently drew on the discourse of postmodernism in the context of explicating experimental theatre. And, like many people of my generation, I believed that thinking about performance through adjacent disciplines enriched creative practice and generated new settings and techniques for teaching theatre. I still hold this view. However, I am sceptical about the truth claims made by all critical vocabularies, including my own. Consequently, this book often adopts the ironic tone of Richard Rorty's pragmatist philosophy, aspects of which inform its central argument. Scepticism is not the same thing as outright dismissal, so while I often express frustration with the protocols and practices that govern academic approaches to theatre, I

continue to invoke and use theoretical vocabularies and concepts in my teaching.

That said, the disparity between this work's anecdotal and scholarly registers is intentional and, to some extent, unavoidable. The book's style *performs* its argument by exposing the tensions between its different stylistic registers: the work combines anecdotal reflections with critical analyses. It is important to declare at the outset that I have lightly fictionalised the short, reflective narratives to preserve the anonymity of my students and academic peers.

The book's primary thesis is that different vocabularies perform different functions, and we need to be mindful of the limitations of academic discourse when we teach creative practice. This is not to say that serious scholarship is pointless, or that it cannot productively inform artistic practice. On the contrary, most of this book enthusiastically invokes a wide range of theoretical discourses. Moreover, I engage with Hans-Thies Lehmann's critical vocabulary, derived from his concept of postdramatic theatre, to underscore its pedagogical value as well as its limitations within the context of creating theatre with students.

Finally, this book intends to generate a series of provocative questions about the status of creative practice in academic institutions by approaching postdramatic theatre from the perspective of a pedagogue/practitioner as opposed to a scholar engaged in performance analysis. It does not suggest that analysis is anathema to creativity, or that theory necessarily impedes artistic practice. Indeed, this book frequently uses academic vocabularies to critique dramatic writing and performances. I hope my scepticism towards critical and institutional orthodoxy will resonate with teachers, students and perhaps even professional practitioners.

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction: Pedagogy, Politics and the Personal	1
2	<i>John Laws/Sade: Postmodern or Postdramatic?</i>	17
3	From Drama to Theatre to Performance Studies	49
4	<i>Ganesh Versus the Third Reich</i> as Pedagogical Parable	73
5	<i>Attempts on Her Life: A Postdramatic Learning Play?</i>	95
6	Teaching History and (Gender) Politics: <i>The Hamletmachine</i> and the <i>Princess Plays</i>	119
7	Devising Postdramatic Theatre in the Academy	151
8	An Enemy of Postdramatic Theatre? Or, What I Think About When I Think About Teaching Postdramatic Theatre	181
	Index	201

LIST OF FIGURES

Image 2.1	“The Cream Bun,” <i>John Laws/Sade</i> , 1987. Courtesy of The Sydney Front Archive, the University of Sydney. Photographer: Regis Lansac	20
Image 2.2	“The Crotch Grab”: <i>John Laws/Sade</i> , 1987. Courtesy of The Sydney Front Archive, the University of Sydney. Photographer: Regis Lansac	31
Image 4.1	<i>Ganesh Versus the Third Reich</i> , courtesy Back to Back Theatre. Photograph by Jeff Busby	78
Image 5.1	<i>Attempts on Her Life</i> , Deakin University. Photograph by Glenn D’Cruz	100
Image 6.1	<i>The Hamletmachine</i> , Deakin University, 2006. Photograph by Glenn D’Cruz	133
Image 6.2	The <i>Princess Plays</i> , Deakin University, 2016. Photograph by Glenn D’Cruz	138
Image 7.1	<i>War and Peace</i> , Gob Squad (2016). Photograph by David Baltzer/Bildbuehne.de	153
Image 7.2	<i>War and Peace</i> , Gob Squad (2016). Photograph by David Baltzer/Bildbuehne.de	155
Image 7.3	From <i>Noir</i> , Group Devised Project, Deakin University, 2014. Photograph by Glenn D’Cruz	168
Image 8.1	Stefan Stern as Dr. Stockmann in <i>An Enemy of the People</i> , 2012, Schaubühne Berlin. Photograph by Arno Declair	184



CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Pedagogy, Politics and the Personal

PROLOGUE

It's 8.30 a.m., and the rehearsal hasn't been going well. The student performers are lethargic. Some can't stop yawning through the warm-up exercises. Others, though bleary-eyed and weary, gamely go through the motions. The lecturer is in a similar mood, but makes a valiant stab at appearing enthused and energised. These early-morning starts are a killer, but there's no contesting the utilitarian logic that claims the new timetable regime makes the most efficient use of university resources. Having dispensed with preliminaries, the students prepare to run through the first scene of the play. One older woman looks a little more agitated, and the lecturer can see that something more than the early-morning blues is troubling her. She fidgets a little before raising her hand to call time-out:

“Can we talk about this, please?”

“Of course, what's the problem?”

“This is just so sexist and offensive! Why does he have to use those words? And what is this play about anyway?”

It's a good question, but before the lecturer can open his mouth, another student, an unruly young man with some kind of attention deficit disorder, pipes up and declares with more than a hint of sarcasm: “The scene is about an absence of character. It's a line from the fucking play.”

The lecturer intervenes, and concedes that it is important to address the play's sexual politics: "My bad. We do need to talk about this. I actually posted an article about the play's gender politics online. Did anybody read it?"

Two students raise their hands. The debate begins. The class talks about irony and the death of character, and the lecturer is pleased the students have come to life:

Irony is just a cop-out. It allows the playwright, if we can call him that, to say, yes, we all know these ideas about women are sexist, but we're going to keep them in circulation, anyway. And it's all supposed to be OK because he obviously being ironic. I call bullshit!

Collectively, the class formulates a strategy for signalling their discomfort with the play's sexism by stopping the performance in media res and asking the audience for their opinions on what they are viewing. The group agrees it might be effective to incorporate the audience responses into the play by using live projections. Basically, they intend to screen live vox pop interviews using a video camera that is fed into a data projector. A young man raises his hand and announces, "That's too complicated, and it's going to detract from our time on stage. Remember, we're being assessed on our performances. Let's not get carried away." The discussion continues, and the group resolves the problem by putting a limit on the proposed vox pop strategy.

This vignette summarises many of this book's themes and tensions: the competing demands of institutional imperatives and creative work, the communication of postdramatic aesthetics, the obsession with educational measurement and learning outcomes, the political and pragmatic consequences of attempting to teach under the sign of equality. But most importantly, this book is about assessing the vocabulary of postdramatic theatre within a pedagogical context. As Gregory Ulmer (1985, ix) noted long ago, there exists a disparity between "the contemporary understanding of reading, writing and epistemology and the institutional framework in which this understanding is communicated (pedagogy, curriculum, evaluation)." But let's back up a little, and say something about my particular context.

PEDAGOGY

The process is more or less the same every year. The students gather in the rehearsal room, waiting for me to enter. Their chatter and laughter do not subside as I walk into the space and survey their faces: a few look familiar

from previous classes, but most are strangers. I have no idea who the majority of these people are, and what skills they possess as performers, yet I will mount a production with them in ten weeks. I have undertaken this task for the last 15 years within the framework of two production classes: the first, a second-year unit, is concerned with producing a full-scale theatre production from an existing dramatic script. The second proceeds without the security of a pre-existing text, and culminates in a public showing of a group-devised performance. This book engages with the conceptual and pedagogical productivities and challenges generated by my experience of teaching these classes and directing the performances associated with them. With very few exceptions, I have deliberately chosen to work with so-called postdramatic texts in the Page to Stage unit. Moreover, I have adopted an explicitly postdramatic aesthetic in the class devoted to creating devised work, hence the title of this book: *Teaching Postdramatic Theatre*.

The concept of postdramatic theatre is, as Marvin Carlson (2015) notes, difficult to define in a consistently coherent manner. I use the term “postdramatic” after Hans-Thies Lehmann to describe contemporary works that reject the primacy of the written text in theatre performance, but do not reject the principles of modernity (formal innovation, experimentation, political engagement). This is why Lehmann (2006, 85) argues, as we shall see in the next chapter, that the term “postdramatic,” rather than postmodern, best describes those contemporary performance works that employ “new” forms of sign usage that privilege presence over representation and process over product and unsettle the status of hermetically sealed fictional worlds situated in a particular time and place. Many of these so-called postdramatic works eschew conventional conceptions of dramatic character—that is, fictional entities driven by psychological motivations and endowed with deep subjectivity. Postdramatic works also unsettle traditional notions of dramatic conflict and teleology, which makes it difficult to employ, say, a Stanislavskian approach to performance—how is it possible to establish character motivation and a logical line of action based on objectives when postdramatic theatre unsettles and contests the necessity of concepts of dramatic character and causality?

Since Lehmann’s formulation of the postdramatic is not epochal, we can find manifestations of postdramatic aesthetics in works from a range of historical periods and a variety of performance genres. For Lehmann, the tendency of much contemporary work to unsettle verities about representation, signification and theatricality is best understood with reference to tensions

and developments within the tradition of modern drama, as opposed to the general cultural logic of postmodernism, which some scholars argue manifests in various contemporary performance practices. We are better off looking for postdramatic theatre's antecedents in the various modernist experiments concerned with unsettling dramatic form than in the discourse of postmodernism. And, as we shall see in my more detailed explication of Lehmann's work in the following chapter, the Brechtian (1964, 91) objective to maintain a distance between performers and spectators for political purposes, or Antonin Artaud's (1958, 74) call to abolish literary theatre, arguably provide a better point of departure for apprehending the political valence of postdramatic theatre than postmodern discourses about the cultural logic of late capitalism, or the death of metanarratives, for example.

However, it is important to declare at the outset that I adopt a critical approach to the concept of postdramatic theatre throughout this book. I remain sceptical as to whether Lehmann proffers what Rorty (1989, 174) might call a *redescription* of an existing set of performance practices, or whether he merely establishes a critical vocabulary that lacks the explanatory force of the postmodern lexicon it contests. In the chapters that follow, I interrogate the utility of Lehmann's vocabulary as I explore its potentialities for unpacking the complexities and aporias of the texts, performances and pedagogical practices I analyse in this book.

I am not alone in choosing to stage postdramatic theatre with undergraduate students. Regarding the United Kingdom (UK) scene, Julia Wilson (2012, 6) notes that "over the last thirty years post-dramatic devised performance practices have increasingly been taught within Higher Education Institutions." Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling (2006, 218) also note that postdramatic work is "formally embedded in the syllabi of teaching institutions in the UK as both process and product." There is a similar commitment to teaching postdramatic theatre in Australian universities. Gaye Poole (2010, 6) suggests that this is partially a consequence of institutional limitations: "the constraints of casting, variable commitment levels and diminishing budgets." Postdramatic theatre, either written by playwrights or devised by students, is flexible regarding casting requirements and suitable for large groups of students. With respect to postdramatic texts written by playwrights, such as Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* or Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*, to name two texts regularly performed by student ensembles, the absence of "lead" roles and fluidity of line distribution among actors makes them extremely malleable, and capable of accommodating groups with different levels of skill, experience

and enthusiasm (Poole 2010, 6). Yet scholars interested in Lehmann's work have produced a relative paucity of critical commentary on the practice of staging postdramatic theatre productions within academic contexts—academics working in the areas of applied theatre, devised theatre or theatre in education produce most of the scholarly work concerned with teaching theatre, and few of these works address postdramatic theatre directly. Further, Duška Radosavljević (2013, 22) observes that we need to understand “the link between the educational contexts from which theatre-makers emerge and the actual theatre landscapes they enter.” With reference to the British context, she points out that, while actor-training institutions feed the theatre and film industries:

university drama graduates arguably have a broader range of opportunities: some end up working as actors, directors, playwrights, designers while many others pursue teaching or arts management careers. Interestingly, however, by the end of the twentieth century, university drama departments have frequently produced groups of people who continued working together professionally—such as Forced Entertainment (University of Exeter), Suspect Culture (University of Bristol), Unlimited Theatre (University of Leeds). (Radosavljević 2013, 22)

This book identifies some of the major anxieties and paradoxes generated by teaching postdramatic theatre through practice within my immediate pedagogical context. It does this by underscoring the institutional pressures that shape my teaching practices. The book focuses on the nuts and bolts of teaching within an institution that expresses concerns about such things as the assessment of collectively generated work, risk factors associated with physical performance and industry-focused learning objectives.

There are many possible reasons for not paying close critical attention to production work within academic institutions (as opposed to conservatories concerned with professional actor training). First, the productions created for pedagogical purposes are not very prestigious or visible: they are made, for the most part, by untrained students, and performed for small audiences primarily comprising friends and family of the amateur performers. Professional critics rarely attend such productions and, if they do, seldom write about them. Of course, there are notable exceptions. The *New York Times* covered Robert Wilson's production of Heiner Müller's *The Hamletmachine* with students from New York University in 1986, but this was mostly a consequence of Wilson's status

and reputation within the New York theatre scene (Rockwell 1986). Second, the economics of scholarly publishing shape disciplinary practices; there is a symbiotic relationship between research projects, the publishing business and the international arts industry. There are bound to be more people interested in the work of celebrated theatre auteurs such as, say, Robert Wilson, Ariane Mnouchkine or Romeo Castellucci than in the work of less renowned artists, or student theatre groups. This is entirely understandable; I am not suggesting that academics should spend more time writing about amateur, provincial or student manifestations of postdramatic theatre, although Lehmann (2006, 121) himself acknowledges that, occasionally, a “lack of professionalism” has its virtues. It is sometimes possible to foster a greater sense of play and experimentation in non-professional contexts.

That said, this book consistently draws attention to the institutional context that both sustains the discourse of postdramatic theatre and generates pedagogical problems for those concerned with teaching it. It also pays attention to the relationships between professional practice, aesthetic theory and pedagogy, since the concept of postdramatic theatre has been formulated within academic institutions. And while the divide between the academy and the theatre industry diminishes as artists regularly enter universities as graduate students and practitioner–scholars, we need to be mindful that postdramatic discourse is primarily a scholarly term that provides conceptual tools for understanding contemporary theatre practice (Lehmann 2006, 19). In one sense, then, Lehmann’s (2006, 19) project is inherently pedagogical: his book attempts to contextualise new postdramatic performance practices with reference to the development of twentieth-century European theatre, and to “serve the *conceptual analysis and verbalization of the experience* of this often ‘difficult’ contemporary theatre as a way to promote its ‘visibility’ and discussion.” Lehmann apparently believes that his explication of this body of work serves a useful pedagogical and political purpose. He assumes his critical vocabulary can promote a better understanding of the cultural and political significance of postdramatic theatre. This book attempts to achieve something similar through identifying the anxieties and aporias generated by staging postdramatic works within the context of university production courses. Put simply, it seeks to generate discussion about a series of pedagogical issues that often fly under the radar because so much scholarly discourse about postdramatic theatre focuses on explicating exemplary productions—for example, the contributions to the book *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political* (Jürs-Munby et al. 2013). Of course, this is not surprising. Explication is often a scholar’s stock in trade. However, most

scholars also teach and need to communicate the value and utility of their research activities to students who may not accept the inherent value of “difficult” contemporary theatre, especially when we compel them to participate in producing such work on stage.

On one level, this book describes and analyses how I approach production work with my students. On another, it provides an account of what Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer (2002, 3) call “conscious teaching”: “that is, teaching with self-reflectivity and a heightened awareness of methods, attitudes, hidden curricula, postures, and inflections.” Teaching and directing are activities seldom observed by one’s colleagues and peers. I have always been curious about how other pedagogues approach their work, and, in writing this volume, I’ve made the assumption that other academics engaged in the messy and labour-intensive task of directing student productions are also interested in how their peers undertake artistic work in the academy. Directing student theatre is a time-consuming, challenging practice that is rarely perceived as legitimate scholarly work, but which requires rigorous research, thought and creativity—at least, that is the impression I get from many of my colleagues who work in adjacent disciplines. Paul Carter’s (2004, xi) concept of “material thinking” goes some way towards correcting this misconception and contesting the assumption that creative practice can be a rigorous form of research:

Material thinking occurs in the making of works of art. It happens when the artist dares to ask the simple but far-reaching questions. What matters? What is the material of thought? To ask these questions is to embark on an intellectual adventure peculiar to the making process. Critics and theorists interested in communicating ideas about things cannot emulate it. They remain outsiders, interpreters on the sidelines, usually trying to make sense of a creative process afterwards, purely by its outcome. They lack access to the process and, more fundamentally, they lack the vocabulary to explicate its intellectual character. For their part, film-makers, choreographers, installation artists and designers feel equally tongue-tied: knowing that what they make is an invention that cannot easily be put into words, they find their creative research dumbed-down ... their social and cultural function dangerously dematerialises.

So, the following chapters account for the practical, intellectual and artistic aspects of the performance-making process from the inside. They present case studies that draw on my experience of teaching and directing scripted and devised student productions of postdramatic theatre.

POLITICS

This book deals with three broad political themes: the relationship between aesthetics and politics, the politics of the academic institution and the politics of teaching. The vexed relationship between aesthetics and politics is a persistent theme in the critical literature on postdramatic theatre. From Elinor Fuchs's (2008) notorious review of Lehmann's book to the essays collected in the volume co-edited by Lehmann's translator, Karen Jürs-Munby (2013), critics consistently interrogate the political value and function of the concept of postdramatic theatre. These discussions, such as those found in Jürs-Munby's book, remind me of the deliberations of Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno and Georg Lukács during the rise and fall of European fascism from the 1930s to the 1950s; these debates, collected in the volume *Aesthetics and Politics* (1977), deal primarily with the political efficacy of realism and modernism, respectively. In the afterword that concludes the book, Fredric Jameson notes that:

Much of the fascination of these jousts, indeed, comes from the internal dynamism by which all the logical possibilities are rapidly generated in turn, so that it quickly extends beyond the local phenomenon of Expressionism, and even beyond the ideal type of realism itself, to draw within its scope the problems of popular art, naturalism, socialist realism, avant-gardism, media, and finally modernism—political and non-political—in general. (Bloch et al. 1977, 197)

Lehmann formulated the term “postdramatic theatre” within the context of the German academy, so it comes as no surprise that his work echoes and resonates with earlier debates about the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and there is certainly value in providing a historical context for the development of new aesthetic practices. Indeed, Lehmann (2006, 27) explicitly states that postdramatic theatre “includes the presence or resumption or continued working of older aesthetics, including those that took leave of the dramatic idea of earlier times, be it on the level of text or theatre. Art, in general, cannot develop without reference to earlier forms.” However, the danger in focusing too narrowly on questions of artistic innovation with reference to earlier historical innovations is that it becomes easy to ignore mutations in, say, the form and function of capital, or the more mundane aspects of political economy, both of which may underpin new performance works. So, while this book engages

with a range of political questions concerning postdramatic theatre practices, it also examines the institutional context that provides a crucial condition of possibility for the consolidation and propagation of the concept of postdramatic theatre. To this end, it consistently evokes certain Foucauldian themes about discourses, bureaucratic structures, administrative techniques, policy initiatives and systems of knowledge that enable and constrain teaching practices. This book examines how the logic of the corporate university manifests in what Jon McKenzie (2001) has called the imperative to “perform or else.” This phrase refers, in part, to the pressure academic institutions exert on their employees to achieve tangible objectives that can be captured in empirical metrics about research outputs, or in student evaluations of academic teaching.

This book is also concerned with the politics of teaching, and the power dynamics that regulate relationships between teachers and students. It engages with Jacques Rancière’s (1991) provocative thesis, articulated in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, that all intelligences are equal to better apprehend the practical consequences that flow from institutional power/knowledge relations that position teachers as experts and students as uninformed and enlightened dupes. Indeed, this book draws heavily on Rancière’s critique of entrenched preconceptions about pedagogy and performance. Most notably, it takes up his challenge to rethink what constitutes engaged activity, as opposed to docile passivity, in the classroom, the workshop and the theatre. The case studies presented in this book identify a series of pedagogical fault lines that expose the power relations inherent in teaching postdramatic theatre within the academy. Methodologically, it uses autoethnography, performance analysis and critical theory to assist university teachers involved in directing theatre productions to deepen their understanding of the concept of postdramatic theatre, and reflect on the institutional and discursive forces that shape the ways we teach.

IS THE PERSONAL POLITICAL?

The personal *is* political, right? Well, this feminist slogan rings true on some levels. It resonates with me insofar as it makes an explicit connection between individual identities and larger political systems. This book takes it as axiomatic that our experience of the world is always filtered through affective energies and impulses that often remain beyond the threshold of conscious cognition. Moreover, these forces are always socially codified,

and place us within political hierarchies. So, the personal is political because the sensory apparatus through which we apprehend the world, and orient ourselves within the world, is political. Our ways of seeing, modes of doing, means of hearing, smelling and touching locate us in the political order of things. This political order is what Rancière (2004) calls the distribution of the sensible, and it determines what can be seen, heard and voiced within a society. It also determines who is included and excluded from participating in a wide range of social, economic and political activities. In very general terms, Rancière is interested in the relationship between aesthetics and politics, which is why I refer to his ideas about pedagogy, equality, aesthetics and politics throughout this work. On one level, he is interested in how communities are established by commonality. For Rancière, this commonality is sensible, the way certain ways of speaking, seeing, hearing and so forth are separated from other sensible modalities to demarcate a community. The distribution of the sensible is about how this partitioning creates groups that are part of the dominant police order and those that are not. It is about the creation of common *sense*, if you will, and Rancière's politics are, like Lehmann's, a politics of perception:

I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a division of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determine the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution. (Rancière 2004, 12)

Obviously, universities promote particular ways of knowing, seeing, hearing and doing, all of which apportion to people various parts and positions to play, and there have been many times during my career when I have felt uncomfortable participating in the social rituals of academe because of my Anglo-Indian ethnicity and working-class background. I do not want to overstate the degree to which my relationship with teaching postdramatic theatre is shaped by my background, but it is impossible to read the critical literature on the topic without being aware of the concept's Eurocentric assumptions about the nature, function and value of art. Moreover, teaching postdramatic theatre to students excluded from

the dominant police order of things on the basis of race, class and gender reveals how a lot of postdramatic theatre fails to connect with students (and audiences) because they literally do not possess the sensory apparatus to see, hear and comprehend postdramatic work according to Lehmann's theoretical schema. This does not mean they are stupid; rather, they formulate ways of seeing and knowing that cannot be specified in advance, or unequivocally manipulated through formal mechanisms that supposedly subvert the police order. More often than not, I use the personal anecdotes about my experience of teaching postdramatic theatre in this book to underscore how the personal is political.

Chapter 2 introduces the concept of postdramatic theatre by offering two readings of The Sydney Front's 1987 production *John Lums/Sade: A Confession*. Originally described as a work of postmodern performance, the work displays many of the features Lehmann associates with postdramatic theatre. Drawing on Rorty's distinction between arguments and descriptions, the chapter examines the similarities and differences between the vocabularies of postmodern theatre and postdramatic theatre as they are used to respectively describe and *redescribe* *John Lums/Sade*. The chapter pays particular attention to the relationship between postdramatic theatre and the tradition of twentieth-century avant-garde drama in Europe by identifying the ways Péter Szondi's seminal book *Theory of Modern Drama* informs Lehmann's concept of the postdramatic. Finally, the chapter concludes with an account of the ethical perils spawned by teaching ideas about avant-garde performance through practice, with a focus on the Artaudian ideas that provide an important condition of possibility for The Sydney Front and postdramatic theatre.

Chapter 3 deals with the institutional and discursive relationships between postdramatic theatre and performance studies with respect to scholars such as Richard Schechner, Shannon Jackson and Jon McKenzie. While Lehmann's book includes a few scant references to Richard Schechner, it says relatively little about performance studies. I argue that performance studies not only establishes an important condition of possibility for the acceptance of Lehmann's work in the academy, but also provides an eclectic set of methodological tools and theoretical perspectives that enable a richer understanding of the political efficacy of postdramatic theatre. After providing a brief account of the genealogy of performance studies by engaging with the work of Jackson, among others, I use McKenzie's (2001) seminal work *Perform or Else* to help me identify the institutional performance imperatives and pressures that enable and constrain teaching practices within universities.

Chapter 4 is about the similarities between teaching and directing with respect to power relationships and ethics. However, its main focus is on the celebrated play *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* (2011) by Back to Back Theatre, which I read as a parable for understanding the power dynamics that suffuse all pedagogical activities. Unlike the majority of case studies in this book, *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* was produced by a professional theatre company, Australia's acclaimed Back to Back Theatre, and has no connection with a university. It does, however, provide an uncommonly astute analysis of the power relations at play within the theatre production environment, thereby introducing one of this book's major themes: equality, or the (im)possibility of equality in the pedagogical situation. Using Rancière's (1991) book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* as a point of departure, this chapter reads *Ganesh* and the critical commentary generated by the work with reference to the ethical challenges posed by teaching, which I unpack in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 reads Martin Crimp's (1997) play *Attempts on Her Life* as an exemplary instance of postdramatic writing. Drawing on the conceptual schema articulated in the first three chapters of this book, I ask how Lehmann's critical schema might enrich our understanding of *Attempts on Her Life*, a play that was written and performed a few years before Lehmann published his book on postdramatic theatre. The chapter contextualises Crimp's work by looking at its early critical reception and its relationship to the era of "Cool Britannia" and the so-called "In-Yer-Face" movement. This chapter also returns to the question of the political dimension of postdramatic theatre by interrogating the work's gender politics, since the play uses irony to deal with the (mis)representations of women within the so-called society of the spectacle. The final section of the chapter describes and analyses a range of pedagogical and political issues generated by a student production of the play I directed in 2003, with a focus on the way Rancière's argument about educational equality can help us explore the ethical dilemmas generated by teaching postdramatic theatre through practice.

Chapter 6 extends the discussion about the politics of pedagogy articulated in the previous chapter by analysing student productions of Heiner Müller's *The Hamletmachine* and Elfriede Jelinek's *Princess Plays*. Despite being only five pages long, *The Hamletmachine* is full of densely packed allusions, quotations and misquotations about European history and politics. As I read it, the play attacks utopian political theories and exposes