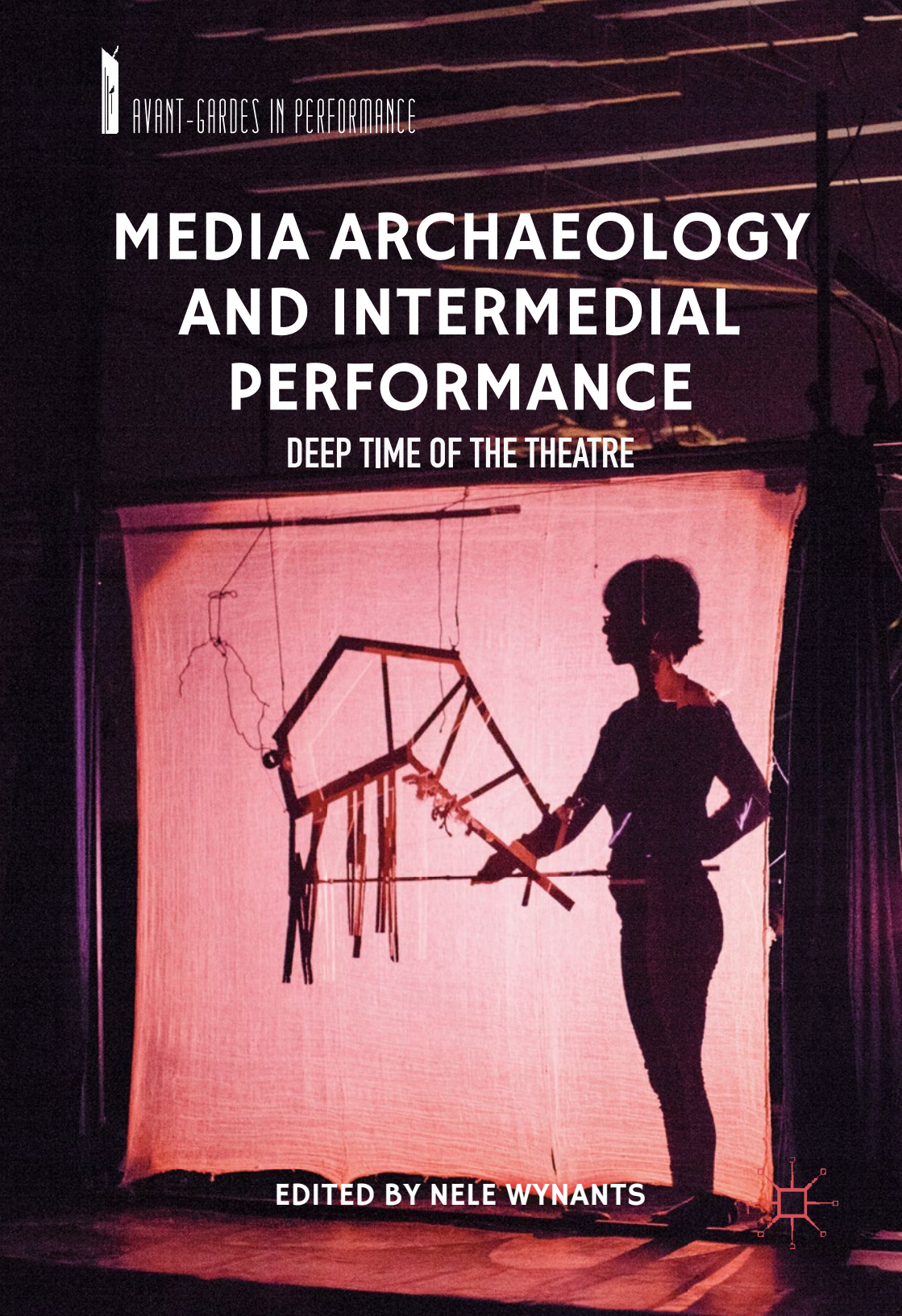
AVANT-GARDES IN PERFORMANCE

MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGY AND INTERMEDIAL PERFORMANCE

DEEP TIME OF THE THEATRE



EDITED BY NELE WYNANTS

Avant-Gardes in Performance

Series Editor
Sarah Bay-Cheng
Bowdoin College
Portland, ME, USA

Despite the many acts of denial and resistance embodied in the phrase "death of the avant-garde," interest in experimental, innovative, and politically radical performance continues to animate theatre and performance studies. For all their attacks upon tradition and critical institutions, the historical and subsequent avant-gardes remain critical touchstones for continued research in the disciplines of theatre, performance studies, film and cinema studies, media study, art history, visual studies, dance, music, and nearly every area of the performing arts. "Avant-Gardes in Performance" features exciting new scholarship on radical and avant-garde performance. By engaging with the charged term "avant-garde," we consider performance practices and events that are formally avant-garde, as defined by experimentation and breaks with traditional structures, practices, and content; historically avant-garde, defined within the global aesthetic movements of the early twentieth century, including modernism and its many global aftermaths; and politically radical, defined by identification with extreme political movements on the right and left alike. The series brings together close attention to a wide range of innovative performances with critical analyses that challenge conventional academic practices.

More information about this series at
http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14783

Nele Wynants
Editor

Media Archaeology and Intermedial Performance

Deep Time of the Theatre

palgrave
macmillan

Editor
Nele Wynants
Free University of Brussels (ULB)
Brussels, Belgium

University of Antwerp
Antwerp, Belgium

Avant-Gardes in Performance
ISBN 978-3-319-99575-5 ISBN 978-3-319-99576-2 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99576-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018964006

Cover illustration: Installation view, *Nausea*, a poetic-scientific performance by Teatro Dondolo/Oona Libens in Cinema Nova Brussels, 2016. (Photo: Annelien Vermeir) As a shadow-player Libens integrates a variety of media archaeological techniques to stimulate all senses.

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Kurt, my loving spouse and compagnon de route

Acknowledgements

The editor wishes to thank the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique-FNRS Brussels for granting her the postdoctoral fellowship that sparked this book. The project was born in the shared context of the research centres THEA and CiASp (Université libre de Bruxelles) and Visual Poetics (University of Antwerp): I owe my gratitude to my generous colleagues and to my friends.

Many thanks to the contributors to this volume for the inspiring exchanges and their patience. Special thanks to Sarah Bay-Cheng, series editor of Avant-Gardes in Performance, for her encouraging support and help. Warm thanks are also due to the artists, photographers, and organizations who gave their permission to reprint pictures of events and productions. Thanks also to Tom René and Vicky Bates at Palgrave.

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Sarah Bay-Cheng is Professor of Theater and Performance Studies at Bowdoin College, teaching experimental theatre and researching the intersections of media technologies and performance, both historically and in contemporary culture.

Edwin Carels is a teacher, researcher, and head of the department of Visual Arts at KASK School of Arts Ghent. He is senior programmer for the Rotterdam Film Festival and also works as a freelance film programmer and curator, with a special interest in the relationship between the visual arts and film, video, and photography. He has published essays on media archaeology, visual arts, film, and animation.

Erkki Huhtamo is a professor at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Departments of Design Media Arts, and Film, Television, and Digital Media. He is an internationally renowned media historian and theorist, and a specialist in the history and aesthetics of media arts. He is one of the founders of media archaeology.

Frank Kessler is Professor of Film and Television History at Utrecht University, director of the Research Institute for Cultural Inquiry (ICON) at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and leader of the magic lantern-related projects *A Million Pictures* (2015–2018) and *Projecting Knowledge* (2018–2023), and also the Dutch partner in *B-magic*. He is a co-founder and co-editor of *KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films* as well as the book series *KINtop Schriften* and *KINtop—Studies in Early Cinema*.

He has published widely on the emergence of cinema as a new medium around 1900, as well as on the history of film theory.

Rudi Knoops is a media artist and scholar at LUCA School of Arts. Central to his practice-based PhD is the appropriation of cylindrical anamorphosis. Using a media archaeology-inspired methodology of short-circuiting past and present, he gauges the affordances of this seventeenth-century media technology and its significance for how we engage with the techno-aesthetics of contemporary society.

Sabine Lenk is a film and media scholar affiliated with the University of Antwerp and the Free University of Brussels (ULB). She worked for film archives in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, UK, and the Netherlands. As one of the co-authors of *B-magic*, a large-scale research project on the magic lantern in Belgium (www.B-magic.eu), she conducts research on the educative role of the lantern in religious communities and masonic circles. Together with Frank Kessler and Martin Loiperdinger she is a co-founder and co-editor of *KINtop Schriften* and *KINtop—Studies in Early Cinema*.

Kara Reilly is Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of Exeter and a dramaturg. She specialises in intersections between the history of theatre and the history of science and technology. Her books include *Automata and Mimesis on the Stage of Theatre History* (2011) and the edited collections *Theatre, Performance and Analogue Technologies: Interfaces and Intermedialities* (2013) and *Contemporary Approaches to Adaptation* (2017).

Katharina Rein holds an MA in Cultural History and Theory, Philosophy, and Ancient History from the Humboldt-University Berlin and is preparing a doctoral dissertation on stage conjuring in the late nineteenth century at the Bauhaus-University Weimar. She works as a researcher and lecturer at the International Research Institute for Cultural Techniques and Media Philosophy (IKKM). Her academic work has appeared in four languages.

Kristof van Baarle is a scholar and a dramaturg. His research focuses on posthumanism in the contemporary performing arts and the conflation of dystopia and utopia in dramaturgies of the end and of the future. He teaches at the Ghent University and works as a doctor-assistant at the University of Antwerp. He is the resident dramaturg for Kris Verdonck-A Two Dogs Company and other artists such as Michiel Vandevelde.

Karel Vanhaesebrouck is Chair of Theatre Studies at the Free University of Brussels (ULB). He teaches in the MA programme "Arts du spectacle vivant" and is director of the research centre CiASp | Centre de recherche en Cinéma et Arts du Spectacle. He also teaches at the theatre schools RITCS (Brussels) and ESACT (Liège). His research interests are situated at the intersection of cultural history and performance studies, ranging from the on-stage representation of violence to the analysis of rehearsal processes of present-day artists. Vanhaesebrouck occasionally works as an author and a dramaturg, mostly but not exclusively in documentary theatre.

Kurt Vanhoutte is Professor of Theatre Studies and spokesperson of the Research Centre for Visual Poetics (www.visualpoetics.be) at the University of Antwerp. During a fellowship at the Centre Alexandre Koyré (EHESS—CNRS) in Paris, he initiated an interdisciplinary research group with historians of science, planetarium professionals, and artists to investigate popular astronomical spectacles (www.parsnetwork.org). Vanhoutte is spokesperson-coordinator of B-magic, a large-scale research project on the magic lantern that started in March 2018 (www.B-magic.eu).

Érika Wicky is an art historian focusing on nineteenth-century visual culture and sensory studies at the Collegium de Lyon—Institute for Advanced Study. She has published *Les paradoxes du détail: voir, savoir, représenter à l'ère de la photographie* (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015) and guest-edited several special issues including *Projeter/Projecting* (Intermédialités, 2016) and *Sociabilités du parfum* (Littérature, 2017).

Jozef Wouters is a Brussels-based scenographer and visual artist. Always starting from a specific context, his constructions and scenographies attempt to focus the gaze of an audience. Strategic spaces thereby enter into dialogues with social processes and the power of the imagination, sometimes functional, sometimes committed or absurd, but always with a focus on the things that preoccupy him as a person. He initiates projects, using his Decoratelier in Brussels as a base.

Nele Wynants is a postdoctoral researcher in the fields of art and theatre at the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and the University of Antwerp. Her work on the interplay of performance, media history, and science has appeared in many journals and books. As a member of the B-magic Project Management Board, a large-scale research project on the magic lantern in Belgium (www.B-magic.eu), she currently conducts research on the role of the lantern in cultural exchanges between European cities and fairgrounds. She is the editor-in-chief of *FORUM+ for Research and Arts* (www.forum-online.be).

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Media-Archaeological Approaches to Theatre and Performance: An Introduction

Nele Wynants

As an age-old art form, theatre has always embraced "new" media. Literally "a place to observe", the *theatron* has often been a favoured platform for trying new technologies and scientific objects, including mirrors, electric light, the magic lantern, the théâtrophone, and, more recently, cameras, digital projection devices, and mobile media. To create theatrical effects and optical illusions, theatre makers have always been ready to adopt state-of-the-art techniques and technologies, and in doing so they have playfully explored and propagated a knowledge of mechanics, optics, and sound to live audiences. Similarly today, in this digital era, performance and media artists are showing a renewed interest in both old and new media and technologies—by experimenting with these media, they explore the potential and limits of scientific and technological developments. In this way, their performances continue the scientific tradition of experimental inquiry, which has traditionally tended to exploit the potential for spectacle of its experiments. Theatre history thus reflects the history of science, technology, and media.

N. Wynants (✉)
Free University of Brussels (ULB), Brussels, Belgium

University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium
e-mail: nele.wynants@ulb.ac.be

N. Wynants (ed.), *Media Archaeology and Intermedial Performance*,
Avant-Gardes in Performance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99576-2_1

This volume proposes media-archaeological approaches to contemporary theatre and intermediality. The aim is to trace and revive the histories of intermedial theatre, examine its historical roots in terms of both scientific novelty and spectacle, and, in doing so, historicize prevailing notions of performance and intermediality. Recent studies of intermedial theatre have discussed the ways in which digital technologies refocus, enhance, and/or disrupt established theatrical practice by involving the spectator and playing with narrative and representational conventions (Giannachi 2004; Kattenbelt and Chapple 2006; Bay-Cheng et al. 2010). These authors focus mainly on the integration of analogue and digital technologies into the live context of the theatre and discuss the consequences of this hybridization for the ontology, aesthetic categories, and reception of digital performance (Auslander 1999; Dixon 2007). The growing need for a thorough historicization of contemporary accounts of digital performance and intermediality has only recently been acknowledged (Reilly 2013; Vanhoutte and Bigg 2014; Wynants 2017). This volume proposes media archaeology as a promising but as yet undeveloped approach to intermedial theatre and performance. By examining the interplay between present performances and their archaeological traces, the authors intend to revisit old, and often forgotten, media approaches and technologies in theatre. This archaeological work will be understood not so much as the discovery of the past but more as the establishment of an active relationship between past and present. Rather than treating archaeological remains as representative tokens of a fragmented past that need to be preserved, we aim to stress the return of the past in the present, but in a different, performative guise.

Deep Time?

The title of this volume is borrowed from Siegfried Zielinski's seminal *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*. In this book, Zielinski introduced a particular approach to media studies, an approach that came to be known as his "anarchic" form of media archaeology. Characteristic of this approach is Zielinski's adoption of a geological perspective. The idea of "deep time" is in particular inspired by James Hutton, a Scottish physician, often considered as the "Father of Modern Geology". Deep time is the concept of geologic time and its measurement by analysing the strata of different rock formations. These strata do not form perfect horizontal layers, as we can see in some of the beautiful illustrations made by Hutton on the basis of his geological fieldwork. Below the horizontal line depicting the Earth's surface, slate

formations plunge into the depths, which refer to much older times. Based on his observations, the Scotsman did not describe the Earth's evolution as a linear and irreversible process. Instead, in his *Theory of the Earth* of 1778, its evolution is described as a dynamic cycle of erosion, deposition, consolidation, and uplifting before erosion starts the cycle anew (Zielinski 2006, 4–5).

Zielinski thus draws an analogy between the idea of geological deep time and the evolution of technical media. Both share irregularities, ruptures, and endless variations in their development. The history of media is indeed not the product of a predictable and necessary advance from primitive to complex apparatus, nor does the current state of the art necessarily represent its best possible state. Cinema and television, for instance—the predominant industries of the audio-visual media in the twentieth century—are considered as *entr'actes*, rather than finished stages, in a longer period of mediated ways of looking. What Zielinki and his fellow media archaeologists attempt is to uncover vibrant moments in the history of media, and in doing so, media archaeology aims to reveal a greater diversity of media forms, which either have been lost because of the genealogical way of looking at things or have been ignored by this view. Zielinski's ultimate goal is to collect a large body of lost, forgotten, or hitherto invisible media and events, which would constitute a "variantology" of media (2006, 7) that escapes the "monopolization by the predominant media discourse" (1999, 9).

The "deep time" analogy is a good fit for the theatre as well. After all, the history of the theatre is also full of ruptures, irregularities, and dead ends, as well as full of recurrent patterns and mechanisms. Moreover, the histories of theatre and media are closely intertwined, which is why this volume aims to translate these media-archaeological analogies to theatre historiography, theatre practice, and theatre studies. The adoption of technological media is after all not restricted to contemporary performance. Even in early modernity, state-of-the-art developments in science and technology were eagerly integrated into spectacular live shows. Some authors have convincingly argued that the history of media in the theatre can be traced back to Antiquity, where it offered "a try-out space for new experiences, emotions, attitudes, and reflexions" (De Kerckhove 1982, 149). Moreover, the theatre has been an enabling environment at every critical juncture in the history of media and technology (ibid.). This holds true for the introduction of the phonetic alphabet, the invention of perspective and the printing press, but also for the more recent mediatization and digitization of Western culture (Boenisch 2006). Given the close relationship

between theatre history and media history, a rereading of contemporary intermedial theatre from a media-archaeological point of view can give rise to illuminating alternative histories. Here then we have the reason why we should historicize the current trends in our contemporary arts and media landscape: not only to find forgotten or dead-end paths in the history of theatre but also, and especially, to gain an improved understanding of our contemporary mediatized culture, where the communication media are omnipresent. Our objective is to look beyond the "new" of new media, because, as Lisa Gitelman has rightly pointed out, all media or methods of mass communication are "always already new" in their original historic moment (2008).

Media Archaeology

The domain of media archaeology is extremely heterogeneous and scholars within this relatively young field use multiple sources and various methods. However, authors such as Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka, Thomas Elsaesser, and Wolfgang Ernst share Zielinski's view that the central premise of media archaeology is to posit alternative genealogies for the development of technology over time. They share a suspicion of the dominant teleological narratives of media and technology histories and propose an alternative approach, namely by emphasizing the heuristic capabilities of forgotten or extinct media devices and practices, they can highlight alternative possibilities in contemporary media development. Here we may refer to the media-archaeological dictum, "history is not only the study of the past, but also of the (potential) present and the possible futures" (Strauven 2013, 68).

Notwithstanding the growing number of key media-archaeological publications and several edited collections, the field has not become more defined. On the contrary, as Michael Goddard has rightly pointed out, "each addition to this archive in many ways only increases its complexity" (2014, 1762).[1] Media archaeology does not offer a clear-cut methodology, but is necessarily a "travelling discipline" to use Mieke Bal's phrase, cited in the introduction to Huhtamo and Parikka's *Media Archaeology. Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (2011). Remarkably, the different practitioners of the discipline provide different definitions. Media archaeology is therefore more a range of approaches than a single well-defined method.

As pointed out above, Zielinski's media anarchaeology or variantology seeks the new in the old to expose what has been neglected or hidden in

the dominant media history narratives and in doing so safeguard the "heterogeneity of the arts of image and sound" (2006, 8). Erkki Huhtamo, another key author in the field, who published at length about a number of recurrent practices in media culture, likewise looks back at the past from the perspective of the present, but with a somewhat different take. He focuses on recurring cyclical phenomena that "(re)appear and disappear and reappear over and over again and somehow transcend specific historical contexts" (1996, 300). Huhtamo calls this the recurring topoi/topics of media culture. For Huhtamo, the task is "identifying topoi, analysing their trajectories and transformations, and explaining the cultural 'logics' that condition their 'wanderings' across time and space" (2011, 28). The emphasis on their constructed and ideologically determined nature gives Huhtamo's approach a culture-critical character. By demonstrating how the past(s) of various media live(s) on in the present, the topos approach helps to detect novelties, innovations, and media-cultural ruptures as well.[2]

Other authors in the field have developed their own definitions and methods, mainly from the angle of film and media history, and often focusing on early visual media devices foreshadowing the invention of film. Thomas Elsaesser, for example, focuses largely on the past and future of cinema, which he considers to be "firmly embedded in other media practices, other technologies, other social uses" (2016, 25). Jussi Parikka's emphasis is on techno-hardware. He considers media archaeology as a particular theoretical opening for thinking about material media cultures in a historical perspective, similar to Wolfgang Ernst's "media materialism", both associated with the work of German media theorist Friedrich Kittler. Ernst polemically argues that media archaeology should be less about writing a narrative human history of media than about excavating the material modes of inscription inherent in technical media such as phonographs (in Huhtamo and Parikka 2011). Nonetheless, the live theatrical context and the performative features of early media shows are often ignored[3]; a media-archaeological study of intermedial theatre has yet to be published.

Archaeology of Intermedial Theatre

Considered to be more of an approach than a method, the roots of media archaeology can in fact be traced back to authors outside the academic field of media research. Philosophical thinkers such as Walter Benjamin

and Michel Foucault, and art historians Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, and Ernst Curtius are recurring references in the development of this domain. Furthermore, the more prominent voices in media studies, such as Marshall McLuhan, are a major influence. McLuhan's seminal analyses of both the "Gutenberg Galaxy" and electronic media clearly have media-archaeological resonances. All these approaches share a critical deconstruction of historical narratives that represent history as a teleological process. Conversely, these authors propose a contrasting approach, an examination of the past as if in a rear-view mirror and emphasizing the heuristic capabilities of forgotten or extinct media devices and practices for the understanding of today's media society.

Working within this broad framework, *Deep Time of the Theatre* brings together essays that approach the object of intermedial performance from a media-archaeological point of view. The aim is not to "apply"—if such might be possible—methods from media archaeology to intermedial theatre and performance practice, but rather to seek an encounter between the fields, to investigate what a cross-fertilization might yield. To say that both fields overlap is hardly necessary—the interaction may thus be fruitful in both directions. What can media archaeology offer theatre studies and vice-versa what methods and perspectives in performance studies might be valuable to media archaeology? To what extent does the archaeological model of historiography provide new, different, or unknown visions of contemporary intermedial theatre and its history? What would the benefits of such an encounter be?

From the multitude of approaches and methods, I foreground only a few important features that may be relevant and fruitful to the field of theatre and performance studies, and pinpoint where overlaps may occur. Initially I examine the central role played by the archive and the crucial relationship between history and theory. The second overlap is a particular concern with the past and the discourse of presence. Finally, I look more closely at the vital connection between research and the arts, and between researchers and artists.

Archive, Theory, and Materiality

Theatre, as a live art form, has a somewhat ambivalent relation with the past. A transitory artistic practice, an event that takes place in the here and now, involves the presence of living bodies. This ontology of the theatre seems to be at odds with the material boundaries of the archive as conven-

tionally conceived of, as the eyewitness account is often considered to be in the most privileged position to do justice to the ephemeral nature of theatrical performance. To reconstruct past performances, theatre historians not only study written sources such as available eyewitness accounts of past performances, reviews, and promotional materials but also pictorial evidence of past theatrical events and ideas such as pictures, drawings, and photographs (Balme 1997). However, historical media and technologies have only rarely been considered as a source for the history of intermedial theatre. A media-archaeological approach can therefore open new directions for theatre historiography, particularly when it starts with material traces and records.

Archaeology is not new to the field of theatre and performance studies. Recent considerations of an archaeological nature have already proven influential within the theory and practice of site-specific theatre (Pearson and Shanks 2001) and interdisciplinary studies of presence (Shanks et al. 2012). Borrowing from Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks's seminal work on what is perceived as an "archaeological turn toward performance", archaeology is understood as a "contemporary material practice", a "relationship we maintain with the past" which works on and with the traces of the past and in which the archaeologist is implicated (1–11). Rather than treating archaeological remains as representative tokens of a now fragmented past to be conserved or preserved according to their calculated value to the present, the authors stress the role of archaeologists as mediators for "making a past work a present presence" (ibid.). As a cultural project, it aims at producing an understanding of the material traces and cultures, the creative event that is the construction of archaeological knowledge, and the historical context of such an archaeological project (Pearson and Shanks 2001).

Foucault's project of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1989) is often the key inspiration for using this term in relation to media and theatre, and provides something approaching a method for media-archaeological research—or at least a number of significant principles for a non-linear account of historiography. What is most useful in Foucault's project is what Elsaesser calls an "archaeological agenda" (2016, 26). This involves an abandoning of the search for "the origin". Instead, Foucault's understanding of archaeology as discourse analysis and the tracing of lineages (ruptures and/or continuities) focuses on the role of discourses as the loci where knowledge is tied to cultural and social power. According to Foucault, material bodies, events, and institutions are all conditioned by

discursive formations. The main goal of Foucauldian archaeology is thus performative, as it aims for historical change.

Despite Foucault's influence on archaeological thinking, some media archaeologists insist on the need for the term to be extended beyond the written archive, which forms the basis of Foucault's studies of disciplinary societies.[4] Media archaeologists also explicitly include material artefacts, and technological media themselves as their objects of study. This insistence on the materiality and the material ecologies of media objects, systems and processes, is in fact one of the key values of the domain (Goddard, 2014, 1762). The material aspects of an archaeological approach should be understood very literally as a concrete activity and a material engagement with devices and sources. But whereas this material approach to media research deals, particularly in the German tradition (Ernst, Kittler and more recently Parikka), with matter, machines, physical infrastructure and operating systems (the hardware) that subtend digital networks (software), this volume is more aligned with the Anglo-American authors who assume that technology acquires its meanings from the pre-existing discursive contexts into which it is inserted (Huhtamo and Parrika 2011, 8).[5]

What we retain for a media archaeology of theatre and performance is the idea of the archive as a primary source, but in its broadest sense, more particularly with a double focus on both the discursive aspects and the material manifestations of media culture. This volume thus aims to develop an archaeological excavation and reading of textual, visual, and technical sources as well as a study of older technologies and collections of artefacts, both as material source and as *dispositif*. The latter term is understood, following film scholar Frank Kessler, as a triadic relationship between (1) a material technology producing conditions that help to shape (2) a certain viewing position that is based upon unconscious desires to which corresponds (3) an institutionalized form implying a form of address trying to guarantee that this viewing position (often characterized as "voyeuristic") functions in an optimal way (Kessler 2006, see also Kessler and Lenk's chapter elsewhere in this volume).

Building on recent thinking within dance and performance studies, we also consider the body as "an essentially archiving entity" (De Laet 2013, 148) that makes it possible to store and transmit forms of embodied knowledge and thus as a source for historiographical knowledge transmission. As dance scholar Timmy De Laet has pointed out, archival theory and performance studies can thus mutually enrich one another in order to reconsider archival functions. The growing literature on re-enactment tes-

tifies to this increasing acceptance of the body "as an endlessly creative, transformational archive" (Lepecki 2010, 46) or by pointing to "the flesh memory" in the embodied repertoires of live art practices (Schneider 2001, 105).

Presence of the Past in the Here and Now

This archival approach touches on another shared concern of theatre, performance, and media historians: the conditions under which the absent past can be said to have "presence" in the present. Media theorist Vivian Sobchack rightly pointed out that what is central to media archaeology is the discourse of presence and its particular concern with the past and the conditions under which it can be *re-presenced* (2011). Following Hayden White, Sobchack claims that the media-archaeological project should be seen as a metahistory in a decidedly romantic mode, because of its almost fetishistic interest in the "presence" of otherwise neglected objects, machines, and technological processes (2011, 328). *Presence* in this context may be understood as

> the *literal* transhistorical (yet not ahistorical) transference or relay of metonymic and material fragments or traces of the past through time to the 'here and now' – where and when these can be activated and thus realized once again in our practical, operative, and sensual engagement with them. (Sobchak 2011, 324)

Indeed, many media archaeologists are concerned not only with the recovery and description of previously neglected or marginalized media-historical artefacts but also with the "techno-historical *event*" (ibid., my italics).

This "presence of the past in the here and now" has, in another context, been described by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht as "the presentification of the past". According to Gumbrecht, this has "little, if anything, to do with the traditional project of history as an academic discipline with the project of interpreting (that is, reconceptualising) our knowledge about the past" (2004, 121). Instead, what Gumbrecht terms "the presentification of past worlds" is about "experiencing the past" by "techniques that produce the impression (or rather the illusion) that the worlds of the past can become tangible again" (94).

In performance theory and practice, presence is both fundamental and highly contested. The discourses on presence have frequently hinged on the relationship between the live and mediated, on notions and effects of immediacy, authenticity and originality (Phelan 1993; Auslander 1999). Today, all types of performance events can simply be broadcast and made accessible to millions of people through their mediatization—be it theatre and performance art, rock concerts, or political performances. Peggy Phelan's assertion that "performance's only life is in the present" (1993) is famous, as is the decades-long rebuttal it prompted in the field. Rebecca Schneider in her signal essay "Performance Remains" of 2001 challenges and qualifies Phelan's influential claims over the ontology of performance by positioning performance in archival culture. Too often, says Schneider, the equating of performance with disappearance reiterates performance as self-annihilating. Instead, Schneider emphasizes the processual nature of disappearance, and considers performance "as both the act of remaining and a means of appearance":

> When we approach performance not as that which disappears (as the archive expects), but as both the *act* of remaining and a means of reappearance (though not a metaphysics of presence) we almost immediately are forced to admit that remains do not have to be isolated to the document, to the object, to bone versus flesh. Here the body (…) becomes a kind of archive and host to a collective memory (…). (2001, 103)

Schneider thus emphasizes the relationship between the "absence" of the live performance and the valorization in contemporary "archive culture" of the "presence" of the document. Here Schneider observes the remains in which the performance is constituted, persists, and may be performed again as a form of "living history" (2001, 103), a "kind of living archaeology, or archaeology of the live" (2014, 60). Challenging the binary between absence and presence, Schneider considers the archive as the locus of the presence of performance's remainder, which enables reading, then, the document as a performative act, and site of performance.

Imaginary Media

Media archaeology is considered as an approach both in academic research and in artistic practice. This is particularly interesting with regard to theatre—both theatre and media are the result of human imagination, they

are projections of dreams, wishes, and desires. Past media that were never realized or in the meantime have died and been forgotten are nevertheless part of our cultural imagination. In the words of Oliver Grau:

> Media archaeology has excavated a wealth of experiments and designs, which failed to become established but nevertheless left their mark on the development of art media. That which was realized, or has survived, represents but a tiny fraction of the imaginings that all tell us something, often something unsettling, about the utopian dreams of their epoch. (Grau 2003, 351)

These dead or forgotten media can be studied as "imaginary media", a concept that became deeply embedded in the relatively short history of media archaeology. Imaginary media, as proposed by Erik Kluitenberg (2011), is an attempt to shift attention from the history of the apparatus to a focus on the imaginary aspects of technological media, both realized and unrealized. It is no coincidence that Kluitenberg included numerous contemporary media artists in both his festival and mini-conference in Amsterdam in 2004 and the ensuing *Book of Imaginary Media. Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium* (2006) published subsequently.

Other authors such as Erkki Huhtamo, especially in his earlier work, Siegfried Zielinski, and Edwin Carels also aligned themselves with archaeological tendencies in contemporary media art, citing the work of artists Paul DeMarinis, Zoe Beloff, and Julien Maire among others. These artists produce work that incorporates explicit references to historical media and machines from earlier phases in the development of technoculture. According to Huhtamo, these artists are not just performing a "luddite technonostalgia for earlier epochs" but are themselves acting as media archaeologists, viewing forms of technology less in terms of "concrete artefacts" than "*discursive formations* enveloping them" (1996, 239, the italics are Huhtamo's). They often display anxiety about and suspicion of the ubiquity of media, which pushes them to investigate and question the role that technology actually plays in contemporary society. A media-archaeological dialogue between historical and contemporary theatre and media practices can thus fashion new and imaginary media forms that at the same time may provide insights and critical perspectives on how we engage with media, and how media define us as human beings.

By examining the interplay between present performances and their archaeological traces, this volume revisits old and often forgotten media approaches and technologies in the theatre. To make this relationship between past and present explicit, most chapters take a specific contemporary practice as their starting point. The discussed artists all engage, in one way or another, with the technological past. This can range from explicit remakes of old apparatus to more subtle (historical) re-enactments or hybrid assemblages of past and present. Some authors depart from forgotten, dead, or hitherto invisible theatrical media and their contemporary echoes, such as the *infini* or painted scenographical backcloth (Vanhaesebrouck and Wouters), the magic lantern (Carels), diorama (van Baarle), or the cylindrical anamorphosis (Knoops). Others focus on the performativity of technology and discuss the way in which contemporary artists explore the histories of mechanical theatres (Huhtamo), robots (Reilly), and astronomical orreries (Vanhoutte). A recurring theme is the striving by all these media for transparency, immediacy, and proximity, especially in the technological effects of *féerie* (Kessler and Lenk) and stage illusions (Rein), olfactory art, and theatre (Wicky) and the spectacular use of microscopes (Wynants). These authors emphasize the survival, the resistance but also the magic of technology.

Media Archaeology and Intermedial Performance: Deep Time of the Theatre contains 13 chapters and is organized into 3 parts: (1) Stage Scenery and Technology, (2) Embodied Technics, and (3) Expanded Theatre.

Part I "Stage Scenery and Technology" explores and contextualizes old stage technologies and their contemporary influences and investigates how technology itself performs in mechanical theatres, féeries, stage illusions, and scenic design. Each chapter in this part interrogates existing narratives of theatre history by re-examining the historical record from the point of view of technology.

Erkki Huhtamo offers a detailed examination of Mechanical Theatres and argues that theatrical spectacles of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries played an important role as models in the formation of media culture. They provided scenographic inspiration for popular touring spectacles like peepshows, puppet shows, and *ombres chinoises*. A particularly interesting case was a spectacle known by many names, such as *theatrum mundi*, *Mechanisches Theater*, or *Theatre of the Arts*. This chapter discusses the mechanical theatre as a cultural form, probing its relationship to legitimate theatre and to rival optical spectacles, such as dioramas and

magic lantern shows, from which it appropriated features. Huhtamo thus situates mechanical theatre not only as a form of folk art or fairground attraction but also within a larger genealogy of media culture.

Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk examine the intermedial dimension of theatrical tricks and spectacular effects in *féerie,* a nineteenth-century spectacular stage genre that is particularly known today thanks to its cinematographic adaptation by early filmmakers (such as Georges Méliès, Gaston Velle, or Segundo de Chomón). *Féerie* tricks were meant to make fantastic events "appear real to the eyes of the audience", as Arthur Pougin put it in 1885. The trick, indeed, is both hidden and exposed in the spectacular economy of the *féerie*. The genre's "trickality" is flaunted, while the means it employs must not be visible. Hence, the permanent search for novelty by producers and their interest in the latest technical developments. This chapter analyses the complex nature of such a magical act in the diegesis (a fantastic universe), relying on advanced technologies that conceal their technicality and artificiality in order to create precisely the authenticity of events on stage that the audience expects.

In the same vein, Katharina Rein discusses the "The Vanishing Lady" of 1886, one of the most iconic stage illusions to this day. By historicizing the cultural tradition of stage illusionism, which is still popular today, and tracing it back to the second half of the nineteenth century, she discusses the ambivalent quality of modern conjuring. For the illusion to be effective, the means of producing it must become imperceptible. At the same time, to enhance the effect, audiences are deliberately alerted of the fact that they are witnessing an illusion. Modern secular magic, Rein argues, thus emerges as a performative practice reflecting on its own mediality.

Karel Vanhaesebrouck enters into dialogue with Jozef Wouters, a contemporary scenographer who developed a project inspired by Giovanni Niccolo Servandoni (1695–1766). Wouters took the work of this French architect, painter, and set designer as a starting point for *Infini* (2015–2017), a title referring to the tradition of painted backcloths. Most old theatres today are still equipped with a full fly installation but unused, it has become, in the words of Wouters "a slide projector without slides". In a media-archaeological spirit, Wouters investigated, in association with a number of other artists, how these old techniques can inspire, but also question, today's theatre. In this interview, introduced and contextualized by Karel Vanhaesebrouck, Jozef Wouters addresses the potential of historical techniques for present-day performing arts.