A SHORT HISTORY OF WESTERN PERFORMANCE SPACE

This innovative book provides a historical account of performance space within the theatrical traditions of western Europe. David Wiles takes a broad-based view of theatrical activity as something that occurs in churches, streets, pubs and galleries as much as in buildings explicitly designed to be 'theatres'. He traces a diverse set of continuities from Greece and Rome to the present, including many areas that do not figure in standard accounts of theatre history. Drawing on the cultural geography of Henri Lefebvre, the book identifies theatrical performances as spatial practices characteristic of particular social structures. It is not a history of contexts for dramatic literature, but the history of an activity rooted in bodies and environments. Wiles uses this historical material to address a pressing concern of the present: is theatre better performed in modern architect-designed, apparently neutral empty spaces, or characterful 'found' spaces?

David Wiles is Professor of Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. His previous publications have been mainly in the field of Elizabethan and Greek theatre, including Shakespeare's Clown: actor and text in the Elizabethan playhouse (Cambridge, 1987) and Greek Theatre Performance (Cambridge, 2000). This is his seventh book.
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DAVID WILES
Contents

List of illustrations vi
Acknowledgements ix

1. Introduction 1
2. Sacred space 23
3. Processional space 63
4. Public space 92
5. Sympotic space 131
6. The cosmic circle 163
7. The cave 207
8. The empty space 240

Notes 267
Select bibliography 303
Index 309
Illustrations

PLATES

   page 5

2. Lanternhouse, or ‘Tower of Dreams’. Graphic by John Fox.  
   61

   78

   90

   94

   110

   112

   114

   116

    117

    119

    133
List of illustrations vii

17. Astley’s ‘Royal Grove’. Print in the John Johnson collection, Bodleian Library. 201

FIGURES

1. Descartes’s diagram of the brain. 6
2. Theatre of Ikarion (based on a plan by C. D. Buck). 29
3. The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens. Reconstruction of the first two phases. 30
4. Temple of Cybele (after P. Pensabene). 33
5. The relationship of temple and auditorium in the Theatre of Pompey (after a realization by the Theatron project, University of Warwick). 35
6. Theatre of Marcellus (based on the archaeological plan by P. Fidenzoni). 36
7. Church of the Sepulchre, Jerusalem. 39
8. Reconstruction of Easter play at Barking Abbey (based on A. W. Clapham’s plan of the foundations). 46
9. The first Goetheanum. 54
10. Theatre of Thorikos (after Richard Leacroft). 66
11. City of Wells in the Elizabethan period. 80
12. Lewes, showing main processional route. 88
13. The Roman Forum in the time of Plautus (after J. Isager). 100
14. The centre of Lucerne, arranged for performance in 1583 (based on a street-plan by E. Konigson). 106
15. Venice as microcosm (after G. Franco). 108
List of illustrations

16. The Piazzetta seen from the canal (after G. Franco). 109
17. Piazza San Marco, with eighteenth-century processional markings (after C. Moughtin). 111
18. Tabarin performing in the Place Dauphine (after an engraving by Abraham Bosse). 123
19. Design by Ariane Mnouchkine and Roberto Moscoso for 1789 (from a plan in *Travail théâtral*). 126
20. Street performance in front of St Paul's Church, Covent Garden. 129
21. The Schawspilsaal at Ulm (after J. Furttenbach). 133
22. A typical *andron* excavated in a house in Athens (after John Travlos). 135
23. Plan of outdoor *triclinium* excavated at Pompeii, with diners. 140
24. Gray's Inn hall: term-time and festive arrangements (based on Knapp/Kobialka). 146
25. Sketch of Manet's *Cafe-concert*. 155
26. Bayreuth. 170
27. Pompey's theatre according to the marble plan. 176
28. Theatre of Marcellus according to the marble plan. 178
29. Vitruvian echo-vases in an idealized Greek auditorium. 185
30. *The Castle of Perseverance*. 188
31. Stage design for *Antigone* at Potsdam (after a sketch by Mendelssohn). 198
32. *South Pacific*, Act 1 Scene 2 (after a photograph by A. McBean). 208
33. Plato's cave. 210
34. Antoine's set for *The Wild Duck*. 230
35. Freud's theatre of the mind. 233
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