

And thanks to you, Dear Reader. If there is to be hope for a book to mean anything, it depends on you. I have found it helpful at points to speculate how 'we' react to performances and their invitations to participate. I don't mean to assume that everyone feels as I do, or ought to. I hope you are not offended.

Introduction

Audience participation

There are few things in the theatre that are more despised than audience participation. The prospect of audience participation makes people fearful; the use of audience participation makes people embarrassed, not only for themselves but for the theatre makers who choose to inflict it on their audiences.

This is true not only among theatre's traditionalists, but also among those with broad horizons, aficionados of theatre informed by a century of experiments with theatre form, by the influence of 'performance' practices originating in fine art, and by an understanding of non-western theatre traditions. Audience participation is still often seen as one of the most misconceived, unproductive and excruciating of the avant-garde's blind alleys, or otherwise as evidence of the childish crassness of popular performance.

Meanwhile techniques, practices and innovations that ask for the activity of audience members and that alter the conventions of performance and audience relationships proliferate and garner critical and popular support. What is it that makes participation exciting to some audiences, and horrifying to others? Or, perhaps, what makes some kinds of audience participation seem trivial and embarrassing, and others substantial, seductive and effective? In what ways are the additional activities (additional to the activity that usually adheres to the role of 'audience member', that is) of audience members meaningful? What kind of conceptual vocabulary do we need in order to answer these questions? Unpicking and exploring some of the difficulties and potentials of audience participation is the purpose of this book.

This is not, however, a defence of audience participation, nor is it an attempt to re-define or re-describe the relationship between

performers and audiences. I do not aim to convince you that 'conventional' audience-performer relationships are bankrupt (I shall return to that 'conventional' shortly), or that participatory performance has the special capacity to liberate audiences or to make spectators more human. Audience participation has many passionate advocates already, and I am inclined to side with them on occasion, but my aim here is to articulate some important things about audience participation that have not been clearly articulated before, and to do so in a systematic way that can be applied to audience participation of any kind.

As I write, fashions for 'immersive' theatre and 'one-to-one' theatre are in the ascendant; the former tends to make use of spatial and architectural interventions, and to ask spectators to involve themselves physically in tracking down or pursuing the performance; the latter seeks a more direct relationship with the individual spectator. Both of these putative new forms often, but not always, ask the spectator to speak or act in dialogue with the performers or the performance environment, or to make choices that structure their experience: they invite the spectator to participate in ways that are differently active to that which is typical of the theatre event. Both terms serve to legitimate participatory practice, offering something more edgy and exciting than mere audience participation, perhaps.

Both trends are undoubtedly influenced by participatory practices in live art and fine art performance, where spectator/art work relationships have been a matter of experiment and innovation since the inception of this tradition early in the twentieth century, though from the basis of – and often as a specific challenge to – a set of conventions and aesthetic principles that belong to the tradition of fine art rather than that of the theatre. The borders between theatre and 'performance' in this tradition are now very porous, and though this book is centrally concerned with theatre, and titled accordingly, I will use some important and interesting 'performance' examples alongside those drawn from what belongs more self-consciously to 'theatre'; there is a growing body of theoretical work in relation to fine art performance that is vital to my analysis, as I will discuss later in this introduction. But the distinction between theatre and performance remains meaningful, even if it depends on institutional practice as much as actual performance practice: what happens in a theatre building, is marketed as theatre or created by a theatre company, rather than presented or promoted by a gallery and created by an 'artist', is recognised and treated differently, though the performance activity itself might be the same in all other regards.¹ This is not the place for a full discussion of this strange phenomenon, but

it is an assumption that is the basis for writing a book about theatre, rather than the now common theatre/performance; and though I will cite several examples that might be designated as such, I am not concerned exclusively with the borderline territory of performance theatre.

So the new trends, the immersive and the one-to-one, motivate an examination of audience participation at this point in time, but they take their place among a much broader range of theatre practices and traditions. Audience participation has always been important in applied and social theatre, where the aim to engage audience members in social activism and personal development has often been achieved through direct involvement in drama at the point of performance of a play. The techniques of participation that endure and thrive this tradition, as well as those in popular theatres, from the British pantomime to the musical, are only occasionally acknowledged or borrowed in the new trend for participation, but they are just as deserving of analysis and interpretation.

Throughout the book the argument will be illustrated by a promiscuous set of examples from practice across this range. Many of them will be drawn from personal practice as an audience participant or as a practitioner. Others are drawn from the literature described later in this introduction, or other people's accounts of their experience of audience participation. Occasionally I have resorted to hypothetical illustrations. Nothing here is articulated with the rigour of a case study, though some of the data was gathered and recorded in this way for other projects, it serves instead as an aid to the articulation of a set of concepts that the reader may find helpful in their own practice or analysis. Each chapter will conclude with a detailed discussion of a performance, or a set of connected performances, that illustrates how the argument of the chapter can be applied. These key examples are, to give an impression of the frame of reference of the argument at this stage: Armadillo Theatre's touring workshop performances for schools (1993–95); Jonathan Kay's fooling performances at Glastonbury Festival and his touring show, *Know One's Fool*, (2000–03); De La Guarda's *Villa Villa* (2000), an internationally toured dance performance from Argentina; and two plays by Tim Crouch, *The Author and I*, *Malvolio* (2010–12).

Of course all audiences are participatory. Without participation performance would be nothing but action happening in the presence of other people. Audiences laugh, clap, cry, fidget, and occasionally heckle; they pay for tickets, they turn up at the theatre, they stay to the end of the performance or they walk out. They are affected emotionally, cognitively and physically by the action they witness. Performers are

Inspired by their audiences and are dismayed by them, feel and feed off connections with audiences, or perhaps try to ignore them. Audiences and actors, writers, directors and producers work together to bind theatre and society together, so that one influences the other, inhabits and is co-extensive with the other, exists in the other as metaphor and metonymy. The balance in this relationship can be precarious, however: performers usually retain authority over the action, while the spectators usually retain the right to stay out of the action, and to watch and hear it. To change these relationships in some way asks both parties to surrender something: both give up some of the control they might expect to have over their part of the event. Should we, then, consider all theatre for its interactive nature, and analyse it as fundamentally consisting of interactions that happen in many different directions, not just between performers and from performers to audiences? Clearly yes, and many writers, such as Daphna Ben Chaim (*Distance in the Theatre*, 1981), Nell Blackadder (*Performing Opposition*, 2003) and Erika Fischer-Lichte (*The Transformative Power of Performance* 2008) take this approach. But I propose that there is a difference between the typical interactions expected and licensed in audience behaviour, and audience participation; it is not merely that some kinds of theatre are more interactive than others, but that there is a meaningful distinction to be made, from which there are useful things to be learnt.

My definition of audience participation is simple: the participation of an audience, or an audience member, in the action of a performance. The discussion that follows throughout this book uses examples of audience participation that can be understood in these terms. This kind of audience participation appears in many kinds of performance: far too many and too broad a range of practices to be considered as a movement, a school or a tradition of its own. But thinking about these things together, for what they have in common, is worthwhile because participation of this kind is exceptional, even though common. It is an exception to the familiar social occasion of theatrical performance, in the sense that we understand what an audience is in this context and understand how we should behave as part of one, so that activity that goes beyond this role *feels* different and *is* different to the activity that we expect to see and take part in. It feels different to the person who does it and to those who witness it. In this important experiential sense it is different to the action performed by those who take roles as performers, even if the actions they perform are in any other sense the same; and it is different to the activity performed in the role of spectator, even if this activity (in the form of laughter and applause,

for example) might be louder, longer, and a more faithful expression of the what the spectator feels at any given moment. In this definition activity where people arrive at the event as participants – at a workshop or a rehearsal, for example – is not audience participation. Nor is the experience of audience members who respond to a performance without becoming part of its action – in their deeply or shallowly felt emotional and intellectual engagement with the work. Nor is the ritual activity that belongs to the role of audience: applause, laughter, and the vital choice to attend a theatre event in the first place. All of these things can appropriately be called ‘participation’ in theatre, but they are not what I want to consider as audience participation. This simple definition entails some problems, of course. What is an audience? Why should conventional audience response, which can make such difference to the course of an evening at the theatre, not be included? What is action? What is a performance?

These questions run through the book, and are addressed in many different ways. The origin and experience of action, particularly in the sense of agency in relation to events, is articulated with terms from social psychology, sociology, phenomenology and cognitive philosophy. Action in the theatre always has at least two dimensions: as everyday social action and as action within the extra-everyday space (often but not always conceived as a fictional space) of the performance. These two dimensions combine and conflict with each other in especially interesting ways in audience participatory performance, which I will show to be important to the way this action functions as aesthetic material. The audience, too, will be conceptualised in different ways through the book. For my purposes an audience is both a socially constructed practice, and a notional position in relation to external and internal phenomena: we become audiences and understand what we do as audience members because of traditions that we inherit and adapt, but we also go through our lives taking the position of spectator to the world around us, our own actions in it as well as those of other people.

The third important term in my definition is performance, a term that also has more than one relevant meaning. Performance has a register that comes before the theatrical or the artistic, in which we manage our presentation of ourselves, and in which we find the materials that allow us to become ourselves: audience participation exists in this register, as well as in the territory of theatrical and artistic performance. Audience members are performing themselves, and performing ‘audience’ as they watch performances. But in the definition above ‘performance’ stands

for the theatrical and artistic register into which participants step, taking with them their performative social selves.

However, having asserted this definition, I must acknowledge the degree to which it is provisional and strategic: it serves to demarcate a field that will be meaningful to most readers, and vital to the framing of my argument. Although the defence of the terms of the argument, as outlined in the previous paragraphs, will become a useful and informative thread to that argument, it will not entirely remove a difficulty with the definition that entails from its basis on contingent (historical, institutional, conventional) practices: that these practices change, and most importantly, that the phenomena that I am observing are often instrumental in this process of change. So what constitutes action in my definition will change, sometimes quite quickly, as conventions of audience behaviour change. Rather than fundamentally undermining this definition, this invites attention to this changing context, which is often – not coincidentally – where the interesting dimensions of audience participatory performance occur. It also invites a shift in approach to this definition and the need for such a definition: if what constitutes participation is necessarily constantly in flux, why attempt to demarcate these exceptional practices at all? Why not pay attention to all social action as participation, on its continuum with dramatic and performance action? This is certainly a tactic that I will take occasionally, as my argument progresses, as it is necessary to explore this borderline just as theatre practitioners explore it. But it is not my purpose to write a new theory of the audience in theatre, so I will continue with my definition in place, as it puts some useful – if at times uncertain and porous – borders around a field.

In the opening paragraphs of *Space and Performance* (2000), Gay McAuley shows how the twentieth century's definitions of theatre (she gives examples from Bertolt Brecht, Eric Bentley, Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook) all acknowledge the vital communication between the audience and the performer. McAuley finds that theatre is built around the spatial relationship between these positions:

The specificity of theatre is not to be found in its relationship to the dramatic, as film and television have shown through their appropriation and massive exploitation of the latter, but in that it consists essentially of the interaction between performers and spectators in a given space. Theatre is a social event, occurring in the auditorium as well as on the stage, and the primary signifiers are physical and even spatial in nature. (McAuley 2000: 5)

The defining spatial characteristic in this passage is the division of one group from the other, so that they can be brought together in a social order based on this separation. A social occasion becomes a theatre performance partly through the separation of performers from audiences. The manner of this separation, achieved architecturally and socially, is historically and culturally specific, as is the behaviour considered appropriate to the role of audience members. The current relative passivity of the audience in the European theatre tradition has not always been the convention, as Susan Kattwinkel (2003: ix) observes:

The passive audience really only came into being in the nineteenth century, as theatre began its division into artistic and entertainment forms. Practitioners and theorists such as Wagner, with his 'mystic chasm', and he and Henry Irving with their darkened auditoriums, took some of the many small steps in the nineteenth century that physically separated the audience from the performance and discouraged spectatorial acts of ownership or displeasure or even vociferous approval.

Prior to this the sense of the activity that was appropriate to an audience was much broader, as it still is in many non-European cultures and other performance traditions (such as stand-up comedy or popular music). Pre-nineteenth century European and North American audiences would socialise openly in the auditorium, buy and sell, and venture opinions about the play itself, to the extent of exercising a right to 'cry down' or 'damn' a play (as in *Blackadder's* excellent account of the last throws of this power of veto at the turn of the twentieth century). What an audience is and does is historically and culturally contingent, often in complex ways. In this context my definition of audience participation is also historically and culturally contingent, not in the sense that it is intended to pin down what audience participation is at the historical and cultural moment at which I write, but in the sense that as understandings change of what an audience is and does, so the sense of what is or isn't audience participation under this definition also changes.

Famous examples of audience participation are often notable events in the progress of experimental performance: The Living Theatre's *Paradise Now*; the Performance Group's *Dionysus* in '69; Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*; Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm 0*; Annie Sprinkle's *Public Cervix Announcement*; De La Guarda's *Villa Villa*; Punchdrunk's *Faust*; and Tim Crouch's *The Author*. Anyone familiar with these pieces or their reputations will note also that some of them are notorious as markers

of the excess of experimentation. There are also audience participation practices that are less transgressive and which inhabit quite different traditions with quite different ambitions: the British pantomime, for example, and the Theatre in Education movement. These modes of practice also stand out as exceptions to the general rules of theatre practice because they feature audience participation so heavily. Audience participation marks a border in our understanding of what theatre is and can be, and like many border zones, it is interesting as such. But in commentary on moments (even of iconic moments) of audience participation, there is often a significant gap, a lack of concern for how it was achieved, and for what moments of participation might have meant in themselves because people other than the performing company acted in them. The fact that people have participated and what they have contributed to a performance might be commented on, but how it is that they have been led to do so is most often not considered worthy of comment. In an account of Ono's *Cut Piece*: '[t]he audience was invited to cut the clothing from Ono, who sat or knelt on the stage. Ono's placing herself as the object for unwrapping or potential destruction was rare' (Iles in Ono 1997: 14). The imagery of exposure and violence is referred to, as is the artist's place at the centre of the work, but the even more rare placement of an audience member as the subject that does the unwrapping – or as the potential agent of destruction – is not discussed here or in the rest of the article, nor is the procedure that led them to it. Without this involvement of the spectator as a performer of the crucial action of the piece, it would have been a quite different work, and yet the technique that allows this to happen goes unrecorded, as does its effect on the participant. But a consideration is necessary, because Ono clearly intended something to happen that actively involved her audience, and this intention is not the same thing as the process through which it comes to fruition. Ono has made herself and her body into a part of the media of her art, but she has also made the audience members and their bodies into media. Further questions arise about the performances of these participants: Ono has involved them in an act of symbolic violence, and it seems safe to assume that their participation is voluntary, but beyond that how far can we say that they are in control of what they do? It is quite correct that this account prioritises the agency of Ono, because she has ultimately inflicted this violence on herself, in an event that appears to have left participants with two kinds of conflict to choose from: either rejecting Ono's invitation to cut, or cutting as they have been asked to. Just who has cut or not cut may be less important, in this instance, than Ono's choice to initiate the

action, but we can be confident that it was important to those present whether they participated in this way or did not.

There are procedures through which participation is invited, and there are processes through which the performances invited become meaningful in a way that is different to other performances. These processes make the audience member into material that is used to compose the performance: an artistic medium. This book brings the processes and media of audience participation into focus and provides a theory for uncovering the procedures through which practitioners create the participatory processes they aim for. Most simply put, the argument is that these processes and procedures, particularly in the control they both share and withhold and in the point of view that they engender in the participant, are aesthetically important.

The range of practices brought into play by this definition and by the nature of my enquiry is very broad, but there is some narrowing of the field through a focus on the invitation to participate, rather than the whole phenomenon. There is more to be said about how participation is maintained by practitioners, and experienced by those who accept an invitation, but my analysis will mostly be limited to the activity that makes an invitation understood by an audience and the process through which they accept (or decline) that invitation. This includes the first few moments of participation, as the change of role takes effect, and inevitably will stray further into the implications of what kind of participation has been invited and what kind of activity can ensue. By focussing on the moment when the definition of the theatrical situation changes I aim to unpack the most important aspects of this transformation.

Why 'aesthetics'?

In an important sense anything that provides a new component of the general theory of art is a work of aesthetics; but this is an 'aesthetics of the invitation' in a more deliberate sense than that. It is part of my assertion that the actions and experiences of audience participants is worth paying attention to: I aim to show that these actions and experiences are aesthetic material and have characteristics that need to be thought through in an appropriate way. It is an assertion of a concern with the dynamics, functions and value that the moment or episode of audience participation has as part of an event or work of art. The key questions become, in this light, concerned with what about audience participation has to be considered as aesthetic material, and what is

particular about the aesthetic material of audience participation. The answers to these questions, as I have just suggested, lie with the way the audience member herself or himself becomes the artist's medium, and so the work's aesthetic material.

Aesthetics as a discipline has always been concerned with these values, characteristics and functions, but the word 'aesthetic' has proliferated in meanings in a way that is not always helpful in organising our thinking about these matters. As Leonard Koren says in his short but very useful book *Which Aesthetics Do You Mean?: Ten Definitions* (2010: 3):

although "aesthetic" and "aesthetics" appear to agreeably elevate the tone of whatever discourse they're used in, they rarely function as mere decorous vacuity. Yet because these terms confusingly refer to so many disparate but often connected things, the exact meaning of the speaker or writer, unless qualified, is sometimes unclear.

Of Koren's ten definitions, several will be at stake in my discussion. Most of all it is the nature of my argument as a development of a small corner of the philosophy of art that qualifies it under this term. But my argument also has a part to play in continuing discussions about the place and nature of beauty, and other dimensions of artistic quality, and of the development of artistic styles and tastes. Koren also notes that the aesthetic sometimes stands for a particular cognitive mode, and the intimate relationship between audience participatory performance and the subjectivity of the participant makes this very relevant.

Aesthetics, as the philosophy of art, has always been concerned with what art is and what it is good for. One of the consequences of the enormous broadening of the available categories of art practice, and the phenomenon of the appropriation of the everyday to make art (in collage, in surrealism, in live art and so on) through which an object or an action becomes art simply because the artist says so (and other people are sympathetic enough to this claim to treat it as such), is that since the early part of the twentieth century aesthetics has had to proliferate too. It is no longer possible to have one theory of the aesthetic – if indeed universal theories of art were ever adequate – it is necessary to recognise a different 'aesthetic' for each different practice of making and receiving work. This is related to, but not entirely the same as, the sense of an aesthetic as a style of art making and its associated consumption. It is relevant to the argument of this book where the performance practices that include audience participation each evolve their own distinctive aesthetic, which include participation in their media alongside more

familiar elements such as spoken language, choreographed movement and scenography. An individual aesthetic will contain an implicit definition of what art is, within its practice: what is, and by implication what is not, to be viewed or experienced in an art-appropriate way in the context of this practice. And indeed it will contain an understanding of what it means to treat things in an art-like way.

The argument of this book is that there are certain things that will appear repeatedly in the aesthetics (in this sense of multiple, distinctive associations of production, recognition and reception) of audience participatory performance practice, such that they are worth considering as foundational concepts for the analysis of this kind of work, or of the aesthetic that is in play in any example of it. The work becomes meaningful through its aesthetic, and this aesthetic – as a collection of propositions about what an artwork is and how to respond to it – if examined in detail can tell us much more about the meanings and potential meanings of the work than an analysis that takes effects as the first line of investigation: in order to understand an aesthetic we must understand its media. The 'what it is' of an artwork is built on a common understanding of artists and audiences of what the media of the work are, what is to be given attention and what kind of attention to pay to it. What I do not aim to do here, however, is to isolate and describe the specific aesthetic of any of the contemporary trends for audience participatory performance. This research is being done elsewhere, by other people, in relation to immersive performance and the one-to-one, and with particular depth and rigour regarding 'relational' performance and participatory live art, as I will discuss below. I am confident that what is thought through here will be useful to the identification of the aesthetic conventions that adhere to particular movements, trends and modes of practice, and inevitably my discussion will sketch some of these conventions as I illustrate my argument with examples; but my aim is to isolate and examine what it is that is likely to become aesthetic material when audiences are asked to take action in a performance, and what kinds of outcomes are to be expected when these things are treated 'aesthetically'.

Some trends in aesthetic theory have tried to find the root of a special 'aesthetic sense', to explain what it is about responding to art works that is so peculiarly affecting; this idea is generally rejected in the progressive aesthetics that I am sympathetic to. Some theories – Clive Bell's (2007) idea of an 'aesthetic emotion', for example, and in another of Koren's definitions, of aesthetics as 'a cognitive mode' – recognise the origin of the term and the discipline in 'aisthesis' as sensation and perception in

general; which is echoed by Wolfgang Iser's suggestion that in an aesthetics beyond aesthetics: 'aesthetics should provide the framework of the discipline while art, although important, will be only one of its subjects' (quoted in Halsall, Jansen and O'Connor 2009: 191). Art has a powerful affective dimension, continuous with the affective response we might have to other things and events – to nature, the environment, and to other people and what they do. Similarly, I am interested in aesthetic affects, in the sense that thoughts and feelings are engendered in response to audience participation. As I shall discuss throughout the book, but particularly in Chapters 3 and 4, being in a position to take action, taking action, and having a first-person relationship with that action will inflect the understanding of and the feelings generated by performance.

The idea of the aesthetic as a generalised mode of thought and being has been the subject of vigorous critique, and is treated with considerable scepticism, particularly following the work of Pierre Bourdieu; Terry Eagleton and more recently Jacques Rancière have added their considerable theoretical weight behind this critique. Bourdieu's sociology has shown how the social practices that we collect under the concepts of art and the aesthetic belong to our class and cultural structure, and ultimately serve to preserve privilege. Rancière, (2004, 2009b), though opposed to Bourdieu's particular conclusions about social structure, also opposes a sense of the aesthetic as transcendent, and portrays the aesthetic as one of a series of 'regimes' under which that which we now call art has been governed. Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990) surveys the thought that has accompanied this regime, from Baumgarten and Kant as the originators of the enlightenment aesthetics with its project to separate the understanding of art from politics, ethics, logic and other kinds of thought, and to conceive a separate space and a separate state of being for art. Eagleton's view is broadly in line with Bourdieu, that by and large the concept of the aesthetic has been a bourgeois ideology, serving to justify – in varying and often contradictory ways – social relations in the service of capital. In *The Radical Aesthetic* (2000) Isobel Armstrong has challenged this view, proposing that the propositions of European aesthetics over this time have often been explicitly progressive, and sometimes able to put into effect the work of using art in the causes of liberty and equality; there is work to do, however:

The project that arises from questions about democratic access to art is actually that of changing the category itself, or re-describing it, so

that what we know looks different, and what we exclude from traditional categories of art also looks different. This task is not accomplished. (Armstrong 2000: 16)

A contemporary aesthetics is implicated in this project, as is any progressive art practice. As a practitioner and teacher of 'applied' theatre myself the work of re-describing the category of art and its potential for social change is a daily task; making robust claims for emerging practice like the ambitious and thoughtful use of audience participation is also part of that task; and the following propositions about what else the idea of an aesthetics can mean are proposed with this context in mind. Identifying the media of audience participation serves this task, but further to this is identifying the way in which we relate to these media and make them meaningful.

The idea of the 'aesthetically pleasing' is often used in the making of theatre as well as in everyday conversation about encounters with things that can be subject to a simple judgement: furnishings and architecture, music and clothes, the arrangement of food on a plate, lighting, costume and sound, movement in a space. This idea is somehow included in the category of art but excepted from its more rigorous demands. Pleasure in this sense is something that has some of the characteristics of the beautiful in Kantian aesthetics, it is palpably personal, but also worth arguing in a general sense, and it can prompt the recognition of a property apparently held by the object in question. Obviously this kind of aesthetic pleasure has to be understood as part of the regime of the practice of art that we live within, so that what we feel in response to it, what we are able to say about it (and say through it) is anything but independent of who we are and where we come from. But this notion of aesthetic pleasure does point to something ineffable in art experience, the felt response that can persuade us to make claims for universality, or at least to urge others to appreciate what we appreciate. If this is something like the beauty that has fascinated and eluded aestheticians for hundreds of years, and which is now treated with great scepticism as a tool of dominant (particularly sexist) bourgeois ideologies, then it survives in everyday speech. There has been a return to the idea of beauty and the felt response to art experience, for example in Janet Woolf's *The Aesthetics of Uncertainty* (2008), which proposes a feminist approach to beauty, in Joe Winston's *Beauty and Education* (2010), which asks for a consideration of the power of beauty in pedagogy, and James Thompson's *Performance Affects* (2009), which similarly shows how emotional response to participatory drama can be as important as

its capacity to facilitate measurable 'impact'. Where classical aesthetics will privilege the beautiful or the sublime, progressive and participatory aesthetics (both styles and theories) are as interested in other pleasures and other effects: the uncanny, the unexpected and the transgressive, perhaps. Most importantly they include the potential for political and ethical values and outcomes to form part of the definition of aesthetics and the work of art.

Most of the significant writing about audience participation has placed a political agenda front and centre, prior to aesthetic considerations of these various kinds. This is not the case with other kinds of performance, for which we are able to identify their formal characteristics and their media in a way that is at least in one sense prior to the discussion of politics. In music we are aware that tone, rhythm and volume are the media of the musician; in dance the moving body and its relationship to the space around it and to other bodies are the comparable fundamental building blocks of the art form; in theatre these spatio-temporal elements usually combine with the voice and words. As Bourdieu has demonstrated convincingly, none of these things can be considered as independent of their social context, or immune to a political critique. All of these artistic forms, even the manipulation of sound, space and time in music and dance, are implicated in the politics of social differentiation and its expressions of power and subordination. But in articulating these forms we allow ourselves a space for discussing fundamental elements that defers the political and ethical until a later point. What I want to do for audience participation is to suggest that there are questions of media that are fundamental to it that can be discussed in these terms, and to defer the political analysis of them very briefly. As John Dewey says in *Art as Experience*: 'Everything depends upon the way in which material is used when it operates as medium' (1980: 66). This may be the biggest contribution that will be made by this book in terms of 'aesthetics' – identifying what it is that practitioners of audience participation work with.

The practice and theory of audience participation

Where does audience participation happen? As a teacher of applied theatre and a maker of Theatre in Education (TIE), I declare an interest: as someone who has taken audience participation for granted throughout my career, and who is determined to think and write about its application in community and educational contexts at the same time as in more conventional theatrical contexts. TIE, Theatre of the Oppressed,

Museum Theatre, Reminiscence Theatre, Theatre for Development and all the other multiplying fields that find themselves under the discursive and pedagogical umbrella of applied theatre, whenever they put on performances for audiences, are as likely as not to ask those audiences to participate. These fields deal in participation of other kinds: longer term involvement in the research, conception, devising and reception of performances, as well as participation in workshops that never reach an audience at all, are these days often considered to be the most challenging and appropriate activities to make lasting impressions on people's lives. Audience participation is no longer at the cutting edge of applied theatre practice, but nevertheless, these fields and others like them are part of the 'where' of audience participation.

Children's theatre, including British pantomime and other traditional and popular forms, often make use of audience participation, or have audience activities as familiar parts of their codes of behaviour. Commercial musicals also have their interactive components: sometimes explicitly framed invitations to sing along, (as with *The Rocky Horror Show* or *Return to the Forbidden Planet*) though also in the apparently audience-led mass singing often heard in the 'jukebox' musicals of the last decade (*Mamma Mia*, *We Will Rock You*, even Graeae's *Reasons to be Cheerful*). Though audience participation has often been a marginal and experimental impulse, it also has its place in the most commercial performance and is enjoyed by some of the largest audiences.

I have already noted a series of recognisably experimental works, some of which should be thought of as 'live art' or 'performance'; many of the most interesting approaches to participation happen in these areas or on their very porous boundaries with experimental theatre. Among the conceptual points of origin for performance in the fine art tradition is the presence of the viewer of the work in the temporal event of its creation and reception, and the relationship of the artist to that event and to the viewer. This is work that is predicated on formal experimentation, so the proliferation of positions for the viewer/participant is to be expected. Explicit connections between fine art performance and theatre are sometimes evident, as in Schechner and the Performance Group's collaboration with Alan Kaprow for their early 'environmental' theatre, while Robert Wilson and Hans Peter Kuhn's *HG* (1995, a production which is an acknowledged influence on Punchdrunk's *Felix Barrett*) saw acclaimed theatre practitioners adopting the style of the art installation.

Audience participation in applied theatre can be traced to early TIE and Augusto Boal's early use of 'simultaneous dramaturgy' in the 1960s;

live art performance has made use of it at least as far back as Kaprow's 'happenings'; its use in traditional and commercial performance can be traced further back than that, to the nineteenth century music hall and beyond; there is an unbroken continuity between traditional performance in some African traditions and contemporary playwrighting – Fern Osofsan, for example, makes this explicit in the form and content of plays like *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1978, published in Gilbert 2001). But though it is not new, it seems to be particularly current, especially evidently in fringe theatre in London over the past decade. To say why this is so suggests a different, historical and cultural enquiry to this one, but for the moment note that over this period a brief – and not exhaustive – list of successful audience participatory theatre playing in London would include: De La Guarda's *Villa Villa* (1999/2000) and *Fuerzabruta* (2006); Shunt's *Dance Bear Dance* (2003) or *Amato Saltone* (2006); Punchdrunk's *Faust* (2005) and *The Masque of the Red Death* (2007); Tim Crouch's *The Audience* (2009–10); and Para Active and Zecora Ura's *Hotel Medea* (2009–12). Though all of these are recognisably fringe events, each (with the exception of *The Audience*, at the Royal Court, though this too has been revived several times and toured extensively) had a very wide appeal. They played to large audiences over long and often extended runs, and often charged ticket prices equal to shows in the West End. The kinds of participation on offer in these pieces vary immensely, and are often accompanied by alternative audience–performer formations and relationships. The appetite among a substantial number of theatre-goers to be or become a different kind of audience, and to accept the invitation to participate, is evident.

There is a growing tendency for theatre artists and producers to label work as immersive: Punchdrunk, for example, claim to be pioneers of 'a game-changing form of immersive theatre' (2010). This particular term is interesting in its implications and assumptions about audience experience, and about the nature and potential of theatre and performance. Perhaps the term will become the point of convergence for a trend towards experimental audience strategies, but its usefulness in this study is to point up an attitude to the experiential nature of participation. Not all audience participation would be claimed under the rubric of the immersive (vague though that is, at this stage), but the suggestion of being inside that comes with the idea of the immersive has resonances with the experience of being able to take action within the work, and with the changed point of view that is gained through this experience that I suggest are the special characteristics of audience participation. To be inside the work, not just inside its physical and

temporal space but inside it as an aesthetic, affective, phenomenological entity gives a different aspect to the idea of a point of view, and of action, so that the idea of immersive theatre will be a particularly useful reference point for parts of my argument.

Despite its significant presence in diverse fields of theatre and performance, and this growing popularity among theatre makers and audiences, comparatively little has been written about the processes of audience participation, even when the phenomenon has been documented. Two books, which bear the title *Audience Participation*, serve as examples of two different ways in which the field has been addressed in print up to now. The earlier of the two, Brian Way's 1980 volume (*Audience Participation: Theatre for Young People*), is a practitioner's guide to a specialist practice: the children's theatre of which he was a pioneer. In contrast to this is Susan Kattwinkel's collection of essays (2003), each of which is concerned with different performances, rather than forming a single continuous theorisation. Both are useful books, but do not present the broad-based theorisation that is possible. What they do offer is a variety of accounts of audience participation events and audience participation techniques: Way's book of practice with young children and teenagers, in theatre buildings and in school halls; Kattwinkel's of a range from avant-garde dance, eighteenth-century theatre, pantomime, to community-based drama. Writing that provides this kind of material is fairly common: work that records audience participation as a part of its description or analysis of performances without making it a main focus. It appears in work that surveys counter-cultural theatre in the sixties and seventies, by Kostelanetz (1994), Kershaw (1992), Craig (1980) and Ansoorge (1975). In surveys of performance art and live art, such as Goldberg (1979), Kirby (1965) and Case (1990), more experiments appear sometimes including the same personalities. Mason's (1992) guide to street theatre and Coult and Kershaw's work about Welfare State International (1990), show both how these progressive audience participations grow and become part of practice that consolidates and diversifies in the years that follow. More recent use of spectator involvement in fine art performance has been theorised as dialogical, by Kester (2004), and relational, by Bourriaud (2002), and the claims of both these writers have been contested by Bishop (2004, 2006, 2012). Applied theatre's literature contains many accounts of audience participation, for example, Haedicke and Neillhaus (2001) on community-based theatre, and Sahi (1998), Byam (1999) and Byam (1985) on Theatre for Development. Where writing on applied theatre draws heavily on Boal's practice, his participatory techniques inevitably receive a lot of attention,

In Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman (1994), Babbage (2004), Dwyer (2004) or Mda (1993) for example; and Cohen-Cruz's recent *Engaging Performance* (2010) places Boal's practice within a continuum of participatory practices. O'Toole (1976) and Jackson (1997, 2007), offer analytical views of audience participation practice in Theatre in Education.

Boal's own writing is easily the most influential by a practitioner theorising his own practice, both in terms of the work done in applied theatre and in the way it is thought about, though both his theory and practice attract a degree of criticism. For the reader in English, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) provides his alternative theatre historiography, critique of the non-participatory nature of conventional theatre and proposal for a participatory theatre practice, though one has to look to his other books, such as *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992) or *Legislative Theatre* (1998) to find more detailed account of the techniques. Schechner, in *Environmental Theatre* (1994) gives some detailed consideration to the practicalities and the ethical difficulties of asking for participation in progressive theatre. Less well known is Gary Izzo, whose *Interactive Theatre* (1998) is concerned with commercial applications of similar techniques and sets out a new terminology of its own. Johnstone's (1981, 2000) writing about improvisation contains many passing references to handling audience suggestions, and effective ways of making use of participants, but only against the background of improvisation by 'performers'. Where there is sustained writing about audience participation the perspective is usually that of a maker of theatre rather than of an observer, the emphasis, at least for Boal, Izzo and Johnstone is on understanding work as it is done, explaining it rather than examining it. For Boal certainly, and partly for Schechner and Izzo, audience participation is presented as a solution to questions asked about conventional theatre, rather than as something to be questioned in its own right. Schechner does go further, offering unresolved questions about what can be achieved with audience participation; some of these unanswered questions are addressed in this book.

Claire Bishop has established an influential body of work on the subject of participation and interaction in fine art performance. In it she challenges romanticism about the emancipatory potential of participation, and the contradictory thinking that underpins some of this critique, drawing significantly on Jacques Rancière and taking issue with Pierre Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*:

To argue [...] that social participation is particularly suited to the task of social inclusion not only assumes that participants are already

in a position of impotence, it actually reinforces this arrangement. (Bishop in Halsall, Jansen and O'Connor 2009: 254).

Far from active engagement in itself being enough to open an intersubjective space that will alter the social relations at play around the space of the interactive work, it is in danger of reproducing the assumptions of that dominant social space, if it does not put itself to work in opposing them specifically. An art that does not focus on the harmoniously social, but on the capacity for 'relational antagonism' (Bishop 2004: 79) within the aesthetic frame of an interactive work has the potential to scrutinise 'all easy claims for a transitive relationship between art and society' (Bishop 2004: 79), and to properly critique society itself. This antagonism can be expressed both within the work and in its relationships with its social and political contexts: interactive work must be allowed to clash with those that it invites to participate, as well as to create convivial spaces for them to come together. She notes that in the work of Jeremy Deller and Phil Collins:

Intersubjective relations are not an end in themselves but serve to unfold a more complex knot of concerns about pleasure, disruption, engagement, and the conventions of social interaction. Instead of extracting art from the 'useless' domain of the aesthetic and fusing it with social praxis, the most interesting art of today exists between two vanishing points. (2009: 255)

To occupy this space between two poles it needs to engage with both – the aesthetic and the social; it follows from this that in order to be able to understand and assess this work we need to have a full understanding of what is aesthetic in this context.

In re-orienting the agenda of the political and ethical claims of participatory art, and asserting the importance of considering the aesthetic characteristics of the work as well as its work in the social sphere, Bishop helps to set the scene for this study of audience participatory performance. What I pursue in this book is not an extension of this debate: for a start the work with which she is concerned is clearly part of a different institutional environment, and the terms in which she addresses it are drawn from that tradition; equally, this practice is not always participatory in the sense that I am interested in. Its characteristic, as 'social' art, is that it makes explicit extensions of the art work into the social contexts that surround it, and makes these extensions and their impact into aesthetic material. Sometimes this is through audience (or spectator,

given the different viewing practices of the field) participation, but often the participation of the 'public' is invited and contracted in very different ways. Think, for example, of Santiago Sierra's 2000 work *Workers Who Cannot Be Paid, Remunerated to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes*, presented in Berlin, Havana and Guatemala City, where 'the imagery of boxed people both metaphorised and literalised local refugee and labour politics' (Jackson 2011: 61). Clearly this imagery is assembled around the bodies and subjectivities of these 'boxed people', but they are not the audience, their own relationship to the work is relevant – as well as troubling and problematic – but the key orientation of spectator to art work has not been fundamentally altered in this work. My citation here is to Shannon Jackson's *Social Works* (2011), which is a substantial contribution to the debate initiated by Bishop. Jackson takes steps to undermine the binaries that are instituted in this debate:

- (1) social celebration versus social antagonism; (2) legibility versus illegibility; (3) radical functionality versus radical unfunctionality; and (4) artistic heteronomy versus artistic autonomy. (Jackson 2011: 48)

And while some of these terms have more resonance in the discourse of fine art than theatre art – polarities of functionality and autonomy certainly – Jackson's nuanced discussion of how politically and socially engaged work can operate across these poles rather than at their ends gives a significant lead in showing how effects and aesthetics can entwine with rather than undermine each other. The terms under which Bishop and Jackson propose we address the value of participatory art will not form a significant part of my discussion, but they are important to its context. Instead I will use two of the contrasting theorists that feature in Bishop's discussions in order to set the terms of a different agenda.

Emancipating spectators

As with the advocates of the 'social turn' in live art performance, some of the champions of audience participation in theatre simplify and overstate their case:

Spectator is a bad word. The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanise him, to restore to him his capacity for action in all its fullness. He too must be a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators. (Boal 1979: 154–155)

This is an extravagant claim. While it is entirely possible to show that the practice of Theatre of the Oppressed, with its audience participatory and extended participation techniques, can be instrumental in stimulating a capacity for (social, political) action in individuals and communities, and promoting an idea of a 'humanised' subjectivity (and some of the works cited above do this, in relation to particular examples of the techniques in context), it is not necessary to exaggerate the failings of conventional spectatorship in order to make this point. More modest claims are made for other kinds of audience participation, which similarly define participatory performance as an improvement of the relationship between performer and spectator:

Since 2000, we have pioneered a game changing form of immersive theatre in which roaming audiences experience epic storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds.

Blending classic texts, physical performance, award-winning design installation and unexpected sites, our infectious format rejects the passive obedience usually expected of audiences. (Punchdrunk 2010)

The liberation on offer here is comparatively limited, but still the conventional audience is denigrated in favour of one that is free-roaming and adventurous. This kind of over-statement can serve as an easy target for those who would prefer a more distanced relationship between spectators and performers. Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009a: 1–23)² is a text that might already represent a cornerstone of a sceptical approach to experiments with actor–audience relationships, and it is welcome as such. In brief, Rancière's argument is to address what has he says has falsely been identified as the 'paradox of spectatorship', and to critique the most famous responses to it. He looks for the grounds for influential theories of the spectator, specifically those of Brecht and Artaud, and finds them in Plato's *Republic*. The paradox is this: 'There is no theatre without a spectator, [...] but being a spectator is a bad thing' (2009a: 2). It is said to be a bad thing because seeing is inferior to knowing, looking is inferior to acting, and in Plato's opinion watching theatre actively stimulates vice and disease. The problematic response to this, for Rancière, is to manipulate spectatorship in either direction increasing or decreasing aesthetic distance, and ultimately tending towards a theatre without spectators. Though Rancière does not make the point explicitly, this can be read as a polemic against the most extravagant claims for audience participatory theatre, especially when we remember Boal's injunction that 'spectator is a bad word'.

His argument is based on an analogy between theatre and pedagogy, in which he casts theatre makers, 'the dramaturges', as traditional 'masters' who know what they have to teach, and collapse distance in order to bring their pupils into possession of that knowledge. This urge to collapse distance is based on a fixation with the inequality of intelligence: on knowing how one's knowledge is greater than another's, and how to give that knowledge to them. In contrast to this, it is the thesis of his *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* that:

The human animal learns everything in the same way as it initially learnt its mother tongue, as it learnt to venture into the forest of things and signs that surround it, so as to take its place among human beings: by observing and comparing one thing with another, a sign with a fact, a sign with another sign. (Rancière 2009a: 10).

On this basis his suggestion is that we dismiss methodologies designed to bring audiences into our superior understanding, and allow them the autonomy to encounter performances as part of the 'forest of things and signs' and thus we respect the intelligence of our audience, and allow their emancipation, which consists precisely of 'the process of verification of the equality of intelligence'.

Among the strengths of the essay are that he makes us wary of manifestos, and ask us to question the dismissal of the spectator – though he may exaggerate Brecht and Artaud, sometimes his caricature of the radical dramaturge reads as if he is quoting Boal; Rancière shows how reductive such arguments can be. He also reminds us that the contemporary potential to cross-borders and blur roles and forms can lead to nothing more than another form of 'consumerist hyper-activism', which 'uses the blurring of boundaries and the confusion of roles to enhance the effect of performance without questioning its principles' (2009a: 21); theatre as shopping, with more choice but to no purpose. But there are a number of things we might take issue with. This is a brief sketch of Rancière's argument, but in that argument Rancière himself makes use of a cartoon of the practice of most theatre makers, in which they have a mission to pass on superior knowledge, and are in thrall to a mistaken, Platonic, antipathy to spectatorship. The essay seems less aware of contemporary practice, than of the manifestoes that inspired it at sometime in the past. It simply isn't the case that most practitioners these days (and arguments could also be made on behalf of Brecht and Artaud in this respect) have a thesis that they wish to transmit, so the analogy with the pedagogical master that is at the centre of the

argument is weak.³ If there is an anti-theatrical prejudice in the contemporary avant-garde, it is more likely to be inherited from Michael Fried's influence on fine art performance. The conclusive suggestion of the essay is that we should 'revoke the privilege of vitality and communitarian power accorded the theatrical stage, so as to restore it to an equal footing with the telling of a story, the reading of a book, or the gaze focused on an image' (2009a: 22); this reads like a manifesto too.

Rancière says that distance is the proper situation: that it allows us equality in relation to the maker of the work, through the mediation of the work itself. Others suggest that intimacy, to the extent of the loss of autonomy, might represent both a materially productive and ethical approach. For Fischer-Lichte, in *The Transformative Power of Performance* (2008), there is no distance between the spectator and the work, because the spectator is part of the work. For her, in all performance, but in a self-conscious and strategic way in performance since the 60s, there is an 'autopoietic feedback loop' (2008: 39). Autopoietic because it is self-generating, an emergent system that arises from itself, with only the input of raw materials rather than an exterior guiding hand; and a feedback loop because the activity of the spectators, however subtle, becomes part of the event, generating the variations in the activity of the performers and other spectators that generate more variations, and so on, and produce the liveness of the theatre event. This is part of her ontology of performance, and if performance makers have made a virtue of it, it would be foolish of theorists to leave it out of the account: 'If "production" and "reception" occur at the same time and place, this renders the parameters developed for a distinct aesthetics of production, work and reception ineffectual' (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 18).

Rancière's 'emancipated spectator', however, knows no feedback loop. He or she meets a performance as a set of 'things', 'signs', that are autonomous, and in the face of which he or she remains autonomous. For James Thompson in *Performance Affects* the intimacy of participation in performance creates its ethical force. Meeting the other in a situation where the forces of affect are working upon us both enhances that encounter, and shows us: 'the limits of our autonomy, and thus our limitless responsibility to others, that I believe should be at the heart of an ethical practice of applied theatre and the starting point for its politics' (Thompson 2009: 153).

This is especially powerful in applied theatre, where the sources of affective response can be so personal and therefore more powerful, but it applies in other performances too. These are two recent proposals for a sense of what theatre is, and what is ethical about it, that come from

very different sources: Fischer-Lichte is writing about the European avant-garde, Thompson about participatory applied theatre. But both offer a definition of theatrical performance that does away with autonomy in the moment of reception, without ever saying that spectatorship is in any sense a bad thing.

The thesis in *The Emancipated Spectator* can be pursued a little further. Rancière's political subject depends on being heard as such: on having a relation similar to that of the emancipated learner available to them.⁴ But crucially, the process by which they should come into this relation is not one that can be imposed from above. The fullest political subjectivity is achieved through a self-initiated democratic outburst. What is in common between this view and that in *The Emancipated Spectator* is that the gap that exists between teacher and learner, between performer and audience, has the potential to allow dissensus, rather than to enforce consensus.

Another contrasting theory of emancipation through performance is found in *Relational Aesthetics*, where Bourriaud draws on the theory of Félix Guattari to suggest that participatory engagement with artworks promotes the fluidity of subjectivity, in positive ways. He describes relational art thus: 'A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space' (Bourriaud 1998: 113), which is a very broad definition, but the kind of work he describes in the book is more tightly bound than this. It is conceptual art predicated on interactions with the social world outside the art gallery and the system of art production. The principle of his theoretical development of this is that the best way to understand contemporary art, and especially relational art, is as an operation on and through subjectivity. For a definition of subjectivity, he turns to Félix Guattari: "'All the conditions making it possible for individual and/or collective agencies to be in a position to emerge as sub-referential existential territory, adjacent to or in a relation of delimitation with otherness that is itself subjective". Otherwise put, subjectivity can only be defined by the presence of a second subjectivity' (Bourriaud 2002: 90–91). He insists that we must de-naturalise subjectivity, recognising that as it comes into being through encounters with otherness, it is assembled and re-assembled through these encounters. Art's job in this process is to resist the neurosis produced by capitalism, ideology, supplier–client relations and all those forms of otherness that press us into rigid, narrow, and frozen assemblies of subjectivisation. Ultimately, 'the only acceptable end purpose of human activities is the production

of a subjectivity that is forever self-enriching its relationship with the world' (Bourriaud 2002: 113). In another striking image, he says that art has the capacity for thermodynamic effects: melting the frozen relations produced by homogenising culture.

Bourriaud's proposal collapses the work itself into the relation between subjectivities, but does not collapse the subjectivity of the spectator into the work, so it escapes Rancière's specific objection in *The Emancipated Spectator*. But they would not agree on the political nature of art, or on the nature of political art. Rancière is very sceptical about a political art that seeks to raise consciousness, as ultimately Bourriaud would like to, as it is akin to not just the old-fashioned schoolteacher but also the general form of political discourse that presumes to make a place for the participant – as opposed to one where the individual has taken that place for themselves. But he is not averse to art which makes propositions or to the possibility of genuine politics emerging from or around artworks. The programme of the relational artwork does not impress him, as it seeks to operate on the subjectivity of the spectator: bringing him/her to the boil. Rancière would rather see this boiling point reached independently.

So there is no synthesis of Bourriaud and Rancière, but there is something more useful at this point in the task of beginning an aesthetics of participation. The synthesis is not in finding a combination or middle ground between these two, but in recognising how both possibilities address something fundamental about subjectivity, and that they suggest why moments like this work powerfully in participatory theatre.

Subjectivity as material and medium

By 'subject' I mean someone who recognises herself as having an 'I', as having her own peculiar perspective; a subject is an agent who is able to be self-reflective, and to assume responsibility for herself and for some of her actions. (Cavell 2006: 1)

Subjectivity in itself can be said to be largely a matter of the point of view of the subject, and their capacity for action, and of the recognition of this position by the subject herself and (missing from Marla Cavell's definition) its recognition by others. For both Rancière and Bourriaud these things are at stake in the spectator's encounter with an art work, and especially at stake because they are dealing with a proposal for an encounter which is up-close, responsive or invasive: that is, participatory. For Rancière the point of view of the spectator must remain at

some distance to the work, and their agency is to be defended to the degree that we would not expect them to take action within the work at all. For Bourriaud's understanding of relational art the point of view is within the work, and has become part of the work, and he seems to have a very flexible sense of agency: if a spectator is participating in an artistic encounter while the work is having a powerful 'melting' effect on their everyday subjectivity, their autonomy must be in question.

To look at it another way, these two component parts could be thought of as the recognition of the participant as a subject within the field of activity of the performance with the potential to enter into dialogue with it, and the addressing of the performance to forms of subjectivity or subject positions that have a special point of view in relation to the performance by virtue of their participation in it. Audience participatory performance has among its building blocks – its media – the agency of the participant, and their point of view within the work.

These two theorists, like Boal, raise the possibility of an emancipatory spectatorship; they see the matter of the recognition of the spectator as subject as a political effect as well as an aesthetic one. It would be possible to reach a similar conclusion about the central position of these dimensions of subjectivity through an analysis based on less politicised theory, through psychoanalysis or analytical philosophy for example, but I find my way there through two politicised approaches and place this discussion here for a reason: to set aside, for the majority of this book, the polemics about emancipation and the political possibilities of audience participatory performance. My strategy is not to avoid politics, but to strategically defer it, and to invite it back into the discussion when my terms are ready for it. The theory that I will exploit in the analysis I present is often social theory concerned with power relationships and how they are enacted in the microcosmic interactions of everyday life. So this deferring of the political does not take it out of the discussion entirely: each of the chapters that follow will move fairly swiftly from some assertions about the various media of audience participation as suggested above, to how they come into play in the interactive, social, and often contested space of episodes of audience participation. Each chapter will begin with questions that are initiated by the logics available when making audience-participatory work. As these questions relate to interactions between people, people as located social subjects, the best approaches to answering them will be found in the – often political – theories through which we can understand social subjects, just as those subjects themselves are embedded in a social life that is thoroughly penetrated by the politics that govern us. But the

questions themselves relate to the logics of practice that arise in the work, and the politics implied by the answers offered here are left to some brief remarks in the conclusion, and to the reader to elaborate for her or himself. As Halsall, Jansen and O'Conner say in the introduction to *Rediscovering Aesthetics* (2009: 7):

the 'aesthetic turn' as a curatorial strategy is [...] contentious because it is feared to prioritise aesthetic (i.e., sensuous, playful, or pleasurable) effects over critical social and political dimensions of contemporary art practice.

I, too, am wary of allowing this priority to hold sway beyond what is needed in order to recognise how audience participation becomes sensuous, playful or pleasurable – or whatever other qualities will arise under this particular sense of the aesthetic. But I am certain that a political and ethical critique will be sorely limited if it does not have the conceptual equipment to show how an art work or event engages us on these terms.

The structure of the book

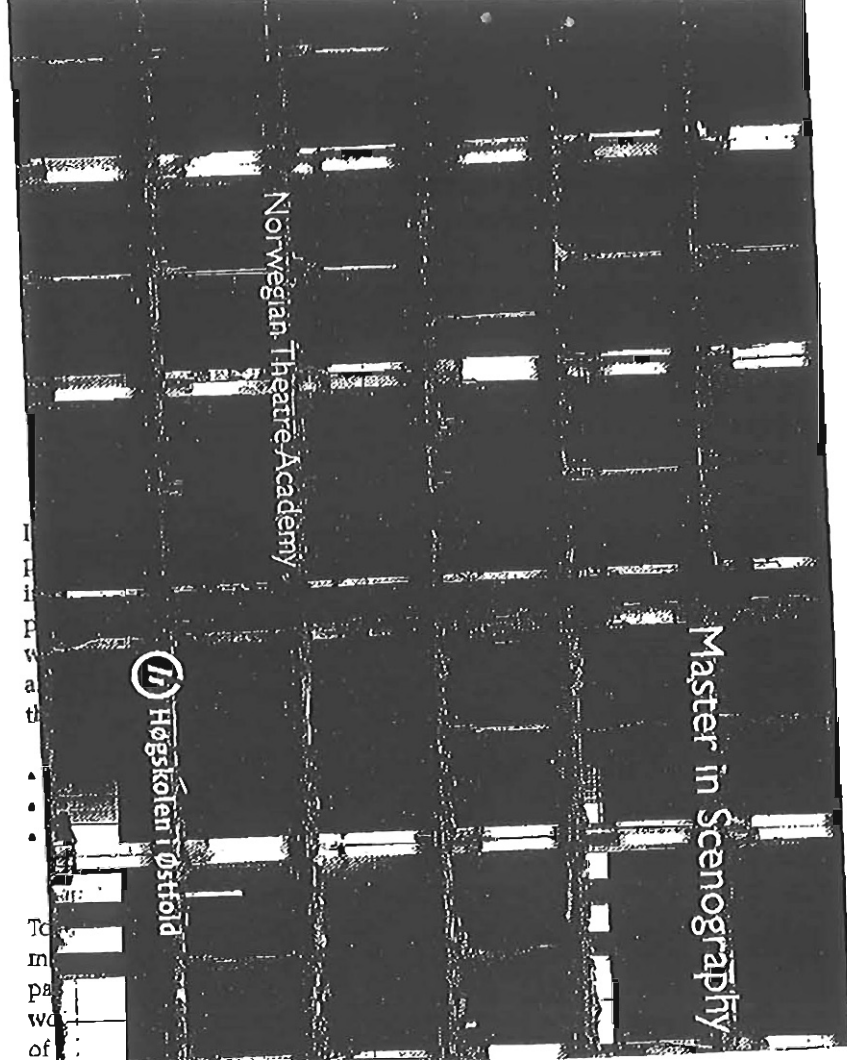
Examining agency means being interested in how people are led to perform, and in how far they can be said to be made to perform, and to give performances that have been conceived by theatre practitioners. By extension this will suggest how people are able to give performances that they invent themselves: the agency of the participant as the inverse, the flipside, of the control of the theatre practitioner. These questions will form the bulk of the analysis of Chapters 1, 2 and 3. The matter of the participant's point of view will inform this analysis, but will be taken up in its own right in Chapter 4.

Chapter 1 'Process and Procedure' sets out an initial theoretical framework for the analysis of audience participatory theatre. Following Anthony Jackson's example (in his work on participatory practice in TIE) I explore some ideas from Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis*, supplementing his terms with ideas from Pierre Bourdieu and Hans-Georg Gadamer, to give this theory a broader capacity to address differences in response through a hermeneutics of social signification. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of a Theatre in Education workshop performance by Armadillo Theatre, an event that both facilitates and manipulates participant agency. In the second chapter, 'Risk and Rational Action', this initial theoretical framework is used to account

for the powerful influence of perceived and real risk in performance. Contrasting practices of disguise, exaggeration or informed consent are discussed as elements of the dramaturgy of participation, with much in common with techniques of facilitation. Jonathan Kay's fooling performances are explored, to test and elaborate the theory in relation to practice that seeks to enact a challenge to audience members' inhibitions.

Disrupting this model of participation as rational action, the third chapter 'Irrational Interactions' considers embodied influences on participation, and how they shape both decisions to participate and the character of participation itself. The terminologies and mode of questioning deployed here are quite different, drawing on cognitive science and the phenomenological philosophy associated with it, as well as ideas from anthropology and evolutionary psychology. These ideas are put to work in an analysis of De La Guarda's *Villa Villa*, a performance that addressed itself directly and deliberately to the bodies of spectator participants. Chapter 4 'Accepting the Invitation' shifts the focus again, onto the experiential aspect of the moment of response, and its effect on what follows. Ideas about the phenomenology of acting and spectating are deployed to unpick the peculiar situation of doing both at the same time, as well as to re-orient Fischer-Lichte's proposition about the autopoietic feedback loop of performance, before turning to Tim Crouch's *The Author* and *I, Malvollo* for an opportunity to consider strategies that encourage reflexivity in the audience experience, using discrete and focussed participatory procedures.

The focus of the book on the moment of invitation means that similar elements of practice and the problems associated with them return many times, to be picked apart in different ways. Though the frame of reference, in terms of the range of theatre practice, is very broad, its focus in these terms is narrow – in effect taking a thin slice across audience participation practice as a whole. Returning again and again to the invitation and its response, and looking at them from different angles and with different theoretical lenses thus gives some hope of saying meaningful things about such disparate practices.



Like most performances, those that include audience participation usually involve a lot of preparation. Like most performances they cannot be considered to be fully realised until there is an audience present to watch, listen and appreciate, and to interact. But the quantity and quality of the interaction that is needed to realise audience participation is different to that which is needed to complete a more conventional performance. Though any performance maker and regular performance watcher knows how much performances can change from one occasion to the next, we are in the habit of considering each performance of the same production to be an iteration of the same work. Does this