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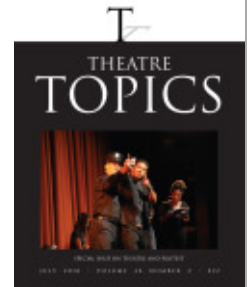
*Stage Combat Arts: An Integrated Approach to Acting, Voice
and Text Work + Video* by Christopher DuVal (review)

Macaela Carder Whitaker

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relations with the live bodies, other objects, moments in time” of its performance (155; emphasis in original). The consequences of staging the animal as object are further elaborated in part 4 by Lourdes Orozco, for whom the embedded gaze of an objectifying perspective reveals the double bind of ocular anthropocentrism, opacifying the “artistic” techniques rendering animals as willing participants or as behaving “naturally” in artificial arenas to their human spectators.

The curatorial capacity of performance to reinforce caring relations through human/animal performative interaction informs the work of Carrie Rohman (part 3) and Holly Hughes (part 4). Problematising animal life as a means to human pleasure, Rohman intersects Rachel Rosenthal’s performative, private and public, reliving of animality as human with the individualization of her rat performers, especially Tatti Wattles. In a correlative view, tracing Kathy High’s work with manufactured lab rats as a “performance of love” (208), Hughes resituates her lesbian family’s cohabiting with dogs and their collaborative performance at agility trials, less to queer the cultural and acculturating structure of binarized sexuality than to destabilize the structure of species’ identities. Both of these essays lucidly remap human/animal relations at the interface of art and life practices, ironically recalling what might be taken as a grounding scene of animal studies, unfortunately absent from this collection: Descartes playing with his beloved dog Monsieur Grat (Mr. Scratch); Descartes conducting live vivisection, reaching his finger into a beating canine heart.

Tracing the posthuman turn in the humanities, sharply interrogating human/animal performative relationalities toward a disciplinary revision of the theory and doing of performance, *Performing Animality* not only issues analytical terms and historical and contemporary avatars foregrounding the ethical concerns focused by animals in performance, but it also compels the political questions now essential for the teaching of dramatic literature, theatre history, and performance studies. While the volume does not specifically address the practical training or work of making theatre, its engaged reflection on the boundaries of the animal bears directly on the ethics of praxis—dramaturgy, directing, acting, playwriting—in which the relation between animality and the human are or should be at stake. Indeed, the essays collected here bear on any arena in which animal, and so human representation and performance are critically designed, directed, or imagined.

HANA WORTHEN

Barnard College, Columbia University

Stage Combat Arts: An Integrated Approach to Acting, Voice and Text Work + Video. By Christopher DuVal. Theatre Arts Workbooks series. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016; pp. 304.

Stage Combat Arts: An Integrated Approach to Acting, Voice and Text Work + Video by Christopher DuVal, is a

unique workbook that joins stage combat techniques with actor-movement disciplines. As a fight choreographer and an educator, it reminds me that stage combat (while a discipline in and of itself) engages the body, voice, and mind in order to create the illusion of violence to tell a story. DuVal recognizes that the inclusion of voice and mind in conjunction with body are often excluded, intentionally or unintentionally, when first learning stage combat. He firmly situates the book as a part of an actor-training curriculum, suggesting that the basics of stage combat are not a separate skill set, but one that should be integral to actor training.

In the introduction, DuVal provides a detailed explanation that this is not a stage combat *manual*, but a stage combat arts *workbook*. His term *stage combat arts* appears throughout the text with very specific intentions; he uses it to highlight the interconnectivity of breath, voice, and physicality that is integral to a fight scene, as well as to differentiate it from the discipline of stage combat. He focuses the book around three main disciplines (Aikido, Stage Combat, and Fitzmaurice Voicework), and highlights how the three disciplines complement one another and how they are intended to be used in the text. DuVal invites the reader to approach the text in “exploration mode” to “engage with an openness and curiosity to developing new patterns of the body and breath” (11). His writing style is accessible and clearly intended for a wide audience, from teachers to student actors. For example, I come to this text as an educator and fight choreographer. I have a familiarity with Fitzmaurice Voicework, but have never studied Aikido; I found DuVal’s application of these disciplines something that I would feel comfortable using in a classroom.

Stage Combat Arts is organized into four chapters that focus on individual topics designed to guide the reader’s development of “connecting the Stage Combat Arts to the overall tasks of actor training” (6). Each chapter is then further split into subcategories (framework; exploration; exercises; follow-up; further reading). All sections have video links to use as teaching tools, which provide a visual to the author’s clearly detailed exercises. What I appreciate is how DuVal identifies his influences and acknowledges sources throughout the text—even taking the text space to thank specific individuals. He also provides “teaching tip” boxes throughout. While the tips are extremely helpful reminders, during my first reading I found them disruptive to the flow of the text, specifically when they appear in the exercise sections. Upon subsequent readings of *Stage Combat Arts*, I found the teaching tips to be helpful in shaping lesson plans and further clarifying exercise objectives.

Recently, a local community theatre reached out to me to create the fight choreography for a production of *Cyrano*, and I found myself returning to *Stage Combat Arts* to aid me in rehearsals. As I was working with two of the actors, I noticed that one was holding his breath, tensing his body, and his defensive moves became dangerous to his partner. I separated the two and tried DuVal’s breath and extension with a weapon (basic party-system exercise) in his chapter on “Breath and Connection.” As he points out, it is counterproductive to “explore one’s freedom and ‘relaxed

readiness' in isolated exercises," because if those exercises do not transfer into stage combat sequences the actor's "habitual patterns of tension" will resurface (52). This particular exercise combines a basic parry drill for a single sword with a breath and weight-shift exercise, encouraging the actor to become aware of body, breath, and weapon. With each parry the actor breathes and shifts weight in the *en garde* position, encouraging the actor to remain grounded in stance while freeing the torso of tension. We spent twenty minutes going through the exercise until the actors had integrated the breath and physical movements; once we began the stage fight sequence again, the actor instinctually began breathing within the fight sequence, which grounded the sequence and helped the actors remain safe as well. The exercise now serves as a warm-up for the actors before each rehearsal.

Stage Combat Arts should appeal to a wide audience. In the introduction, DuVal provides a suggested intended audience: the actor new to stage combat; the stage combat teacher looking for exercises that utilize voice, acting, and intention in fight rehearsals; and teachers (both high school and college) searching for different approaches to teaching movement, voice, and acting (2). I think the text can also serve as a refresher for seasoned stage combatants, those who are used to performing stage combat rather than teaching it. By fronting stage combat arts as an integrated acting approach, the text should be less intimidating for those with limited stage combat training; in fact, it is easily accessible to those artists unfamiliar with stage combat terminology. A former classmate contacted me recently for recommendations; she is scheduled to teach a stage combat section in her voice and movement class, but has little stage combat training. Of course, I immediately suggested this text.

While educators and students are invited to learn from this book, DuVal reminds readers that the choreography in the exercises should be done "only under the supervision of a qualified instructor" (7). I understand this sentiment and in most cases champion it; whenever possible, seek out a qualified stage combat instructor. However, it is important to acknowledge that not every reader will be a stage combat instructor. In fact, educators who will find this text useful for an acting class or a voice and movement class might not be trained stage combatants, and that is the primary appeal of this book.

MACAELA CARDER WHITAKER
Bowling Green State University

Scenography Expanded: An Introduction to Contemporary Performance Design. Edited by Joslin McKinney and Scott Palmer. Performance and Design series. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017; pp. 240.

Joslin McKinney and Scott Palmer's engaging and provocative edited volume *Scenography Expanded: An Introduction to Contemporary Performance Design* is both timely and necessary. In the Foreword, Arnold Aronson suggests that seeing through the lens and employing

the principles of expanded scenography is a means of understanding, organizing, and responding to a wide range of nontheatrical activities: "carnival, theme parks, . . . ritual and festive performances, sporting events, architecture, . . . parades, political events and even urban streetscapes" (xv). Yet, understanding how scenography, or more specifically *expanded scenography* (a term interchangeable with *performance design*), is being used as a critical tool to make sense of the above events and activities has for the most part been ignored. As one of the first collections to provide a survey of contemporary performance design as a critical tool, *Scenography Expanded* does an admirable job of exploring and filling this knowledge gap.

In the introductory chapter to the book, McKinney and Palmer argue "that scenography [can] operate independently from a theatre text . . . is now widely in evidence" and "scenography . . . can happen anywhere," but suggest that "the rapid expansion of scenographic practice . . . has left little room for reflection on what its defining characteristics might be" (1). The anthology is an attempt to begin defining what expanded scenography is. The collection features a number essays written by leading practitioners/scholars who chronicle, catalog, and discuss their practice and use, as well as their understanding of expanded scenography. Creating a solid foundation for the practices, discourse, and theories around expanded scenography is the primary goal of this collection.

The editors suggest that relationality, affectivity, and materiality are central markers of expanded scenography, but then organize the eleven essays into five subsections—"Technological Space," "Architectural Space," "Agency," "Audiences," and "Materiality"—with the "hope that concepts of relationality, affectively and materiality in scenography will resonate throughout and in slightly different ways in each of the parts" (14). It is possible that the eleven essays are micro-organized, and that it is difficult to create a solid foundation on the evidence of two essays. When read in its entirety, however, the volume clearly demonstrates the scope, range, and possibilities of scenography when it is released from the bonds of its traditional function of emblematic representation.

The essays speak primarily (although not exclusively) of the practices of performance design in Europe. This Eurocentric focus might be viewed a slight problem with the volume; it certainly could be problematic, because one of the key aspects and political aims of performance design is the democratization of scenography, and thus concentrating almost exclusively on European performance disrupts this egalitarian approach. However, that concern is easily offset by the understanding of all the contributors that the core of the anthology is on practice and production; this is not a volume of history analysis or disconnected theory, but instead the essays are grounded in examining, reflecting, and discussing expanded scenography as it is currently being used by professional and semi-professional artists.

This emphasis on performance and performance practices is what makes this anthology so vibrant and strong.