

***Multimedia Performance*, by Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer  
(Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)**

By Yuji Sone

*Multimedia Performance* by Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer is a welcome addition to the complex area of scholarly research on contemporary performance that actively deploys digital technologies. Building on previous studies by theatre and performance studies scholars such as Steve Dixon, Gabriella Giannachi, Matthew Causey, and Gunter Berghaus, Klich and Scheer present a new perspective on the ongoing debates concerning 'the convergence of multimedia and performance in theatre practice' (7). While discussing iconic hybrid performances by historical and contemporary figures and groups of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this study also includes divergent works, such as audio-visual installation works and recent reenactment works.

Rather than merely offering a survey of the field, the authors aim to articulate 'emergent patterns' (3) of practice in these works, deploying a wide range of media and new-media theories. They refer to the work of theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Randall Packer and Ken Jordan, Mark Hansen, and Anna Munster, in addition to canonical figures such as McLuhan, Baudrillard, Virilio, Hayles, and Manovich. The authors state that, for them, nuanced discussions put forward by these media theorists on the body and virtuality have assisted to overcome 'the rhetorics of presence which have until recently defined and delimited performance theory, especially in Theatre studies' (104). Klich and Scheer provide the notion of 'multimedia performance' as 'the third term that best resolves' (4) the long-standing opposition between 'the live' and 'the mediated', moving away from 'the dialectic of presence-absence' (193).

*Multimedia Performance* presents a new kind of performance analysis, one that is based on a complex weaving-together of performance theory, media theory, and new-media theory. While admitting that the term 'multimedia' is 'vague' (8), in Chapter 1, Klich and Scheer discuss common characteristics of 'multimedia performance' as they see it, by beginning with the five key theoretical concepts in the study by Packer and Jordan, *Multimedia* (2001): i.e., 'integration; interactivity; hypermedia; immersion; and narrativity' (8). These terms, derived from new-media theories, allow Klich and Scheer to examine a much wider area of artistic practice than Giannachi's notion of 'virtual theatre' or Lehmann's 'post-dramatic theatre'. They also include as 'multimedia performance' audio-visual installation work that 'approaches the condition of theatre' (17). Klich and Scheer's study articulates and develops Causey's notion of 'postorganic theatre' that 'has taken on the ontology of the technological' (16) with 'tools' from media and new-media theories.

In order to theorise patterns of multimedia performance, Klich and Scheer refine their discussions on these key theoretical concepts throughout the book. In Chapter 2, the authors apply the key terms they cited earlier to explore concepts of integration, composition, and interactivity to artistic hybridity, an emphasis on process over product, and audience participation and engagement in their

examinations of artworks. In Chapter 2, they discuss the European avant-garde in the early twentieth century and 1960s Fluxus works; in Chapter 3, their discussion moves to Robert Wilson, Laurie Anderson, The Wooster Group, Lightwork, The Builders Association, as well as new-media installations by Jeffrey Shaw and David Pledger. Chapter 4 then discusses the notion of intermediality, which allows a non-hierarchical relation between the live and the mediated. Elaborating on the notion of remediation, the authors discuss theatrical performance as 'simultaneously immediate (sharing spatial and temporal coordinates) and hypermediate (referencing other media)' (75).

'The body' of the performer and the spectator as a theoretical theme emerges gradually. Referring to Munster's theory on media and embodiment, Chapter 5 indicates the importance of the body for 'multimedia performance' as a pivotal centre of connection and disconnection that occurs 'through technological interfaces' (101). Developing the discussion from the previous chapter, Chapter 6 explores the digital choreographic works of the OpenEnded group with Bill T. Jones and Merce Cunningham, highlighting 'an image of the self or the body no longer based upon appearance but instead expressed through motion and across time' (121). Chapter 7 further develops this understanding of embodied reception as both cognitive and corporeal in the immersive works of Bill Viola, Janet Cardiff, and Blast Theory. In these works, the audience experiences both immediate sensory effects and their constructed, hypermediate presentation. Chapter 8 examines the embodied audience experience in public art, such as in the works of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Blast Theory.

In the last sections of the book, Klich and Scheer suggest a new way of discussing 'presence' in multimedia performance. Chapter 9 examines 'the perceived multiplication of performance presence across different media spaces' (202) in the works of Granular Synthesis, Stelarc, and Blast Theory. The authors argue that 'the body' in these works 'exist[s] between absence and presence, reconstituted as an expandable form' (202), for which Hayles's proposed dialectic of pattern and randomness is more appropriate. Yet, in the conclusion, Klich and Scheer remind us that '[p]resence and absence are not yet irrelevant', and what 'multimedia performance' does is to create 'spaces in which both material presence and informational patterns are placed in proxemic relations to one another' (207), drawing the audience's attention to mediation and artificial construction within a specific environment.

It would have been useful if *Multimedia Performance* had included a glossary to explain the differences and similarities of related terms that are listed on page 11, such as "Cybertheatre", "postorganic theatre", "mixed media theatre", "intermedial theatre" or "transmedial theatre", "video performance", "networked performance", and "computer theatre", "virtual theatre", "multimedia theatre". I would also add the following terms to the list: 'post-dramatic multimedia theatre' (46), 'new media objects' (179), 'remixed performance' (195), 'multimedial system' (205), 'cybernetic performativity' (195), 'super-flat' (44), and 'digital aesthetic' (178). A cataloging of such terms would be helpful for students, though, as the authors acknowledge, the nomenclature for such work is ever evolving.

While *Multimedia Performance* develops complex and sophisticated new arguments, it also provides succinct accounts of issues and debates on performance and technology that have been discussed within theatre and performance studies. Unlike some studies on similar topics, *Multimedia Performance* presents a good balance between theoretical materials and case studies of artworks. It would be very useful for teaching purposes. Indeed, *Multimedia Performance* will be a particularly relevant teaching resource in the Australian context, as Klich and Scheer discuss a number of prominent Australian artists and theorists working in relevant fields.

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