Abstracts

Fabrizio Crisafulli, Place, Light, Body in Theatre.
This presentation expounds the basic tenets of a poetic theatre, generated by the interaction between place, the performer’s body, and light, without the intervention of a pre-existing dramatic text. This interaction is orchestrated and shaped by the director, while the artistic process becomes both an experiment and an act of personal and collective research, where the conventional concepts of theatre work and its operative settings as well as that of set design are called into question.

Anthony Shay, Wrapped in Greek Robes of Spirituality: Isadora Duncan’s Dance Performances, Gordon Craig, and Ancient Greece.
Isadora Duncan shared Gordon Craig’s interest in Ancient Greece and its legacy. Generally acclaimed as one of the founding figures of modern dance, Duncan was inspired by an idealized vision of ancient Greek dance but, unlike other prominent artists such as Martha Graham, she was an interpretive dancer rather than an innovator. She left no lasting pedagogical technique. As this essay shows, it is not by studying her talks and speeches but by exploring her performances that we may fully comprehend Duncan’s real contribution, or lack of it, to modern dance.

Ewa Kara, Theatrical Landscapes: Karl-Ernst Herrmann’s Scenography at the Berliner Schaubühne.
This article examines the most praised theatrical scenography of Karl-Ernst Herrmann, a German designer and opera director, best known for his collaborations with key German directors such as Peter Stein, Claus Peymann and Luc Bondy, during the 1970s and 1980s. History is particularly unkind to stage designers and indeed Herrmann’s contributions have been frequently eclipsed by the notorious figure of Peter Stein. From the point of view of reception history, I juxtapose German scholarship’s constructive appraisal (Balme, Graue, Fischer-Lichte, van den Berg) with the more critical assessment in American scholarship (Riddell, Carlson). Looking at his seven designs, I...
analyze Herrmann’s most innovative sets created for the illustrious Berliner Schaubühne, as he restructured relationships between the actor, audience and the set, as well as experimented with historical styles. It was there that he established his position as an original and pioneering designer. His scenography is protean, versatile, and dramaturgically malleable, whilst his aestheticized designs actively contribute to the interpretation of the text, forcing the audience to actively participate in its performance.

**Nabojša Tabački, Making a Splash: Architectural Drama in Chinese Aquatic Theatres**

The aquatic theatre revival, led by director Franco Dragone, combines theatre, circus, dance, and water displays to create lavish extravaganzas. Reminiscent of Edward Gordon Craig’s vision of theatre, presented in the portfolio of etchings entitled *Motion*, aquatic spectacles use the pool stage and its supporting technology to create a new type of kinetic performance space. Craig’s cubes are exchanged for colliding fountain columns and sprayed liquid surfaces of fine water droplets that, among other features, serve as *screens* to reflect light and projections. Circus artists and gymnasts, suspended from the fly gallery and hung on safety ropes, perform highly stylised movements in the air above the stage and auditorium, like contemporary *Über-marionettes*. With up to 600 stage cues per show, these spectacles come quite close to Craig’s idea of *A Thousand Scenes in One Scene*. No words are spoken; music alone accompanies the constant movements of the performers, the scenography, and the architecture. The wordless drama of aquatic theatres, especially in China, where limits are pushed to the edge, is, above all, architectural drama. Remembering Craig’s *Scene*, which stands for the beginning of the modern theatrical era, this paper examines today’s kinetic spaces in three Chinese aquatic theatres: *The House of Dancing Waters* (City of Dreams, Macau), *The Han Show* (The Han Show Theatre, Wuhan), and *The Dai Show* (The Dai Show Theatre, Xishuangbanna). It asks what it takes in practical terms to realise some of Craig’s ideas, and whether the stage kinetics of aquatic theatres are capable of expressing “all the Revelations of Truth” – in a splash.