

The Haunted Stage

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The
*H*aunted *S*tage

The Theatre as Memory Machine

Marvin Carlson

Ann Arbor

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To Daniel Mesguich

*whose ghost-filled productions have haunted
my memory as they have haunted this book*

For theatre is, in whatever revisionist, futurist, or self-dissolving form—or in the most proleptic desire to forget the theatre—a function of remembrance. Where memory is, theatre is.

—Herbert Blau, *The Audience*

Even in death actors' roles tend to stay with them. They gather in the memory of audiences, like ghosts, as each new interpretation of a role sustains or upsets expectations derived from the previous ones.

—Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead*

What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?

—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

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The reader will quickly discover how important to my study are examples from the living theatre. I must also express my profound gratitude to the many theatre artists in many countries and traditions whose work I have been privileged to see and who have instructed and inspired me in this speculation upon certain aspects of that highly complex and challenging cultural phenomenon, the theatre.