Prologue: Another Cartesian Theater

René Descartes's articulation of subjectivity forever changed the way dramatic characters would be written and read, performed by actors and received by audiences. His coordinate system for geometry radically reshaped how theatrical space would be conceived and built. His theory of the passions revolutionized our understanding of the emotional exchange between spectacle and spectators—an emotional exchange whose elusive workings have anchored dramatic theory since Aristotle's *Poetics* and antitheatrical discourse since Plato's *Republic*. Yet theater scholars have not seen Descartes's transformational impact on theater history. Neither have philosophers looked to this history in order to watch Descartes's theories in action or to understand his reception and cultural impact, despite plenty of rich evidence on display.[1] After Descartes, playwrights self-consciously put Cartesian characters on the stage and thematized their rational workings. Actors adapted their performance styles to account for new models of subjectivity and physiology. Critics theorized the theater's emotional and ethical benefits to spectators in Cartesian terms. Architects sought to intensify these benefits by altering their designs.

Such critical oversights are not difficult to understand in light of the relationship between philosophy and theater, whose uneasiness goes back, of course, to Plato. On one hand, philosophy has looked to the theater for some of its most potent images, as Plato himself did when he imagined humankind in a theater-like chamber, sitting in the dark

and apprehending the shadows before them that were understood, for a time at least, to be real. On the other hand, the use to which philosophy sometimes puts these images may make the theater scholar bristle. When his cave-spectators are "cured of their delusions," Plato holds up philosophy as truer than the fallible theatrical display he likens to puppetry.[2] Theater, we see, is coercive (his spectators are chained); the dramatic poet, we know, is banned from the *Republic*. Elsewhere when it appears in philosophy, the essentially physical work of theater remains sublimated to metaphor. For example, in the first book of his *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume wrote that the "mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations."[3] Hume was hardly the first to describe the immaterial characters and plots whose dramaturgical effects we call consciousness; mental activity has been likened to theatrical spectacle since antiquity, and by philosophers and theorists of quite different persuasions. Descartes himself may have given the metaphor particular traction when he envisioned a performance space in the pineal gland, where, as on opening night, "it all comes together." I borrow the phrase from philosopher Daniel C. Dennett, whose immodestly titled *Consciousness Explained* derides this pervasive understanding as "The Cartesian Theater"—an ersatz image with appeal to "crowds . . . transfixed by an illusion," not unlike Plato's enslaved spectators.[4] Dennett speaks of audiences; Hume, of postures being struck; Plato, of sight lines.[5] But the strenuous labor and pleasing tactility of the theatrical endeavor remain unrecognized.

There is another Cartesian theater. In it Descartes revolutionized stage practices, and playwrights, actors, designers, and even audiences made manifest his ideas. But the disciplinary barriers of the modern academy replicate the quarrel that Plato describes and shield this other Cartesian theater from view. Philosophers exaggerate Descartes's monologic mode: that of a man for whom the theater could never be anything but metaphoric, spending as he does "the whole day shut up alone in a room heated by a stove" with "complete leisure to talk to [himself] about [his] thoughts."[6] Emphasizing Descartes's metaphysics, these philosophers ignore the rich matter that theater history—an embodied history

of ideas—offers to our understanding of a thinker who authored a rich scientific corpus on space, motion, physiology, and other matters vital to stage practice. Meanwhile, theater historians tack in the opposite direction. They might be particularly attuned to the dialogic mode that we see in some of Descartes's other writings, his insistence on the metaphysical benefits of a passionate interaction between actors onstage and off. But if philosophers have retreated to their thoughts as Descartes does at the beginning of *Discourse on Method*, theater historians have steered clear of philosophical questions and focused on the material research concerns—props and playhouses, production costs and box-office receipts, actors' and audiences' respective kinesiologies—that have helped to define the disciplinary contours of theater studies and to delimit its sometimes vulnerable position in the humanities. Those in the theater may fret that their work is easy metaphoric grist for colleagues in the loftier recesses of the academy, in other words. But their focus on material evidence obscures this other Cartesian theater and the explanatory potential of its philosophical insights.

A savvy reader will recognize the figures I have conjured: philosophy favoring the mental; theater clinging to its material; the two in perennial discord, like Punch and Judy in the fairground booth of the academy. In this tableau the boundary between disciplines is made to impersonate the old slash in mind/body, whose much-discussed problem, we have been told, Descartes caused in the first place. But if my caricature ignores the nuances of much work in philosophy and theater studies, it does its dramaturgical work: for the problem of dualism does undergird the relationship between theater and philosophy as academic disciplines, and it does complicate each discipline's view of another Cartesian theater. The solution, Descartes knew, is interaction: the replacement of a bifurcating slash with a hyphen or *trait d'union*, in its telling French name. Presented with a philosopher's immaterial metaphor, a theater scholar could respond with a few bars from Stephen Sondheim:

> A vision's just a vision
> If it's only in your head.
> If no one gets to see it,
> It's as good as dead.
> . . . .

Bit by bit,
Putting it together.
Piece by piece—
Only way to make a work of art.
Every moment makes a contribution,
Every little detail plays a part.
Having just the vision's no solution,
Everything depends on execution.[7]

Listen to Sondheim. He betrays a dualism in his central terms as Descartes did, but like Descartes he reconciles them. In the next line of this song, from 1984's *Sunday in the Park with George*, the play's main character offers the song's signal advice: "Putting it together, / That's what counts."[8] The song finds its dramatic power in its clear metatheatricality, as Sondheim foregounded when he rewrote the song for the 1992 revue *Putting It Together*, in which George's painting process was transformed into the process of putting on a show: "Working for a tiny compensation, / Hoping for a thunderous ovation," etc.[9] Every contributing little detail supplied by actors, directors, designers, and any number of theater personnel has an immaterial dimension—a vision in the head—but finds gloriously material expression in its execution, which the audience gets to watch while the actor playing George sings and moves, breathes and sweats. Sondheim teaches us that the conceptual, the immaterial, the mental are *experienced* in material form not only by the theater artists who put it together but also by the conscious spectator who apprehends by getting goose bumps or (a lot depends on George) yawning. Sondheim thus provides a pithy précis of Descartes's doctrine of mind-body union, and he thus suggests a new perspective on the relationship between philosophy and the theater history that serves to embody it. It is this doctrine, and this relationship, I explore in *The Mind-Body Stage*.

The philosopher is purported to have authored the mind vs. body, thinking vs. extension split that has so bedeviled the philosophy of mind and to have suggested the ontological distinction between costumes and consciousness that sometimes makes the practitioner suspect the theorist, or theater suspect philosophy. But while there is no denying the dualistic physics that inform Descartes's understanding of human beings, careful readings of his work suggest a different emphasis. Twenty years ago, a foundation for such readings was laid by Daniel Garber,

whose book *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* argued for the inextricability of Descartes's scientific interests—his preoccupations with bodies, with motion, with geometry—and his philosophical concerns with everything metaphysical. The picture that Garber presents in this work, succinctly captured in the title of his later collection *Descartes Embodied*, inaugurated a wholesale reenvisioning of Cartesian physiology and psychology and of Cartesian aesthetics and ethics. Subsequently, a body of scholarly work—by Lilli Alanen, Paul Hoffman, Amy Morgan Schmitter, and Lisa Shapiro, to name a few—has illuminated Descartes's doctrine of mind-body union. The effect has been to turn critical attention away from Cartesian dualism and toward what Deborah J. Brown, another revisionist reader of Descartes, has audaciously described as "phenomenological monism," "an *experience* of being one unified and embodied substance."[10]

As Brown diagnoses, a failure to see mind and body as united works in tandem with a reductive view of the Cartesian passions.[11] Descartes is often inaccurately said to have constructed the emotion/reason opposition that Antonio Damasio's best-selling book bluntly denominates *Descartes' Error*. As a result one encounters claims that hastily map one binary on top of another and soon take them as fully synonymous. (One example, from Nancy Tuana: "in rejecting the body as a source of knowledge, emotion is also excluded from the realm of the rational, and rather is seen as a source of error.")[12] These critics see Descartes in Platonic terms, wrongly imagining him to value mind over its rigorously separate counterpart, body, and to oppose reason to emotion. In fact, Descartes defines the emotions as bodily perceptions and thus precisely as a source of knowledge.[13] His explanation of how emotion informs reason relies on the connection he finds between body and soul, since through our bodies we register (and retain) the experience that grounds understanding. Failing to understand the workings of mind-body union, critics such as Damasio and Tuana therefore not only misread Descartes's concept of mind but also miss the crucial role that the passions play in the process of reason. As Schmitter puts it, emotions "have an indispensable role to play in promoting the ends of our *theoretical* reasoning, i.e., good reasoning, and the attaining of truth and the avoidance of error."[14] The theater—surely the most passionate and embodied of arts—enacts this insight with particular urgency and power.

My precise reading of Cartesian mind-body union differs in its details from those of Alanen, Brown, Hoffman, Schmitter, and Shapiro, just as their readings differ in details from one another. But like these philosophers I focus on Descartes's later texts, particularly his six-year correspondence with Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and *The Passions of the Soul*, which he wrote at her request during the winter of 1645–46.[15] In these texts, which represent the fullest and most nuanced versions of his thinking, Descartes teaches us that the passions unite mind and body and that, whatever his commitment to substance dualism, the material and immaterial are inextricable. It is precisely this inextricability to which I hope to do justice in my discussion of the Cartesian theater, not only in my considerations of mind and body but also more generally as I discuss both the archive and the repertory, both literary texts like plays and embodied performance texts like choreography.[16] Analyzing key shifts in theater practice in the one hundred years after Descartes's death, I demonstrate how these shifts—in dramatic theory and plot construction, in acting theory and technique, and in theater architecture—reflect and are implicated in the cultural shift that Descartes engendered. I scrutinize artifacts that include religious jeremiads, aesthetic treatises, and curtain-raisers, treating them not only as archival texts to be analyzed but also as traces of performances to be imagined with the help of other historical artifacts: firsthand accounts, letters, frontispieces, architectural plans, ballet libretti. In other words I balance a study of permanent materials with a study of evanesced practice, mindful that the latter provides a valuable way of knowing even in a context—Cartesian philosophy—that might initially seem surprising. At the same time, I recognize that the process by which philosophical principles are performed by a culture and expressed in (and promulgated by) its artifacts is complicated, and, as in any process of translation, dissonances arise. By paying attention to these dissonances, manifested as they are in theater history, we can better understand how misapprehensions about Descartes arose in the first place. "The history of the theater is a history of ideas," in Joseph Roach's formulation.[17] Here, I attend to how the history of Cartesian ideas has expressed itself in the history of theater and to how performance has helped to physicalize and promote these ideas. In considering the stage after Descartes, I track how Descartes's thought came to be distorted into the received wisdom of

"Cartesianism" and how both this thought and its distortions were performed, sometimes self-consciously and sometimes unwittingly, in theater after his death in 1650. In each chapter I begin my analysis in late seventeenth-century France but move outward to show how key theoretical concepts and material practices resonated elsewhere, especially in England after the restoration of Elisabeth of Bohemia's cousin, Charles II.

In today's academy, and especially in light of the discord between philosophy and theater, the arguments here are necessarily considered interdisciplinary. But we must recall that, however old the quarrel between theater and philosophy, boundaries between academic disciplines are of recent vintage. Punch and Judy have always been part of the same show. Descartes himself wrote on any number of topics from mathematics to music and, as Garber has shown, considered his inquiries into metaphysics and physics to be part of the same knowledge-seeking endeavor. Indeed, he also tried his hand at various kinds of dramatic writing, including *The Search for Truth by Means of the Natural Light*, a philosophical dialogue for three characters, and an untitled four-act play, left unfinished.[18] Many of the key figures considered here—Charles Perrault and Charles Le Brun in France, John Dryden and John Vanbrugh in England—likewise worked across fields in ways that undo the distinctions between disciplines or métiers. Accordingly, I have not separated this book's philosophical from its theatrical considerations, and my analyses of Descartes's writings and of the rapidly shifting material conditions of the stage after 1650 are braided together.

This means that a philosopher looking for my reading of mind-body union will find it not in one place but rather threaded through considerations of actors' lives, audience behaviors, and a wide range of theatrical and paratheatrical activities including masques and impromptus (for "theater," too, was in an earlier time a more capacious category). This philosopher may find value in the perspective provided by these performances, only some of which explicitly thematize mind-body union but all of which express it. To take an example from my first chapter, Descartes explains in *The Passions of the Soul* that wisdom inheres in the body's physiological receptivity to joy allied with the mind's recognition of what is beneficial to the subject's health. But the treatise's insights can be understood more fully by contemplating the ballet *The Birth of Peace*, in which "eternal

wisdom" (*sagesse eternelle* [*sic*]) appears not as disembodied words but as the dancing body of one of the ballet's participants, Queen Christina of Sweden.[19] Similarly, the theater historian looking to understand how a broad range of cultural documents and performances came to express and inculcate the growing Cartesianism of European culture will find these arguments nestled among readings of Descartes's writings. This theater scholar may find that these writings chafe against certain material explanations long accepted as definitive. To take an example from my fourth chapter, Paris's Hôtel de Bourgogne theater switched, in 1689, from individualized set designs to a single, neutral set that could serve any tragedy in the theater's repertory, the so-called *palais à volonté*. Theater history has explained that the new need to run more shows in a given week may have made set changes materially unfeasible. But an understanding of the cultural pressures wrought by Cartesianism suggests another explanation: the universalizing perspective of the *palais à volonté* may have sought to minimize the variability of spectator response, and this variability gained a discomfiting urgency in light of Descartes's articulation of subjective experience.

Readers from both philosophy and theater studies may also encounter methodological maneuvers that strike them as dissonant. Philosophers may be surprised to see first editions cited whenever possible, even in cases when bad early editions are suspected. Leah Marcus has argued that so-called standard editions are often unwittingly shaped by assumptions and ideologies that may cloud the best view of the text, and in my work I have encountered many instances that parallel those she explores in *Unediting the Renaissance*—perhaps especially in Molière's *The Versailles Impromptu*, whose first edition contains marvelously productive ambiguities (as I explore in Chapter 3) that have been tidied by subsequent editors. Therefore, I have heeded Marcus's call for a "temporary abandonment of modern editions" in favor of editions "that have not gathered centuries of editorial accretion around them."[20] Apart from ignoring stylistic typographical ligatures, I have cited text exactly as it appears. Where textual corruptions are suspected, I have alerted the reader. Relying on period sources, I have also sought to avoid the conventional adjectives that editorial scholarship has imposed on the arts of the period. For reasons this book will make plain, theater's "neoclassical" elements sometimes strongly resemble the

very elements that philosophy deems "modern." I have therefore tried to use these and other terms (*classical*, *baroque*, etc.) only as writers of the period used them and to let the arising dissonance tell us something about the conventions that govern our understandings of theater and philosophy's respective histories.

The theater historian will approve these choices but find other surprises. One of the purposes of this book is to clarify the physiology of the passions as this physiology was understood by Descartes and by the culture, steeped in Cartesianism, in the century after his death. As I have written elsewhere, emotions are cultural expressions of particular moments in time and space; a transhistorical understanding of an emotion would be impossible to formulate.[21] At the same time, if Descartes is worth reading not only for historical interest but as philosophy (and thousands of syllabi suggest that he is), there must be something in his formulations that helps us to understand problems from our own time and place—problems that undergird the vogue for cognitive-scientific theater research, to name only one example. Certainly the emotions remain ineluctable; their precise physiological workings, elusive; and we do not have to believe in dubious concepts like the animal spirits or the ensouled pineal gland to find Descartes's writings on the passions philosophically clarifying. Therefore, while my historian's commitment to historical structures of feeling is deeply felt, I have employed the philosopher's habit of occasionally shifting into the present tense to imagine a present-day experience with which to assess Descartes's theory of the passions and its explanatory potential. We can ignore neither the differences that separate us from historically remote writings nor the uncanny endurance of key philosophical questions.[22] My juxtaposition of historical and ahistorical postures, then, is meant to be productive, to put the past and present in dialogue even (and perhaps especially) when tension results.

Several books of the last decade—among them Martin Puchner's *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy*, Freddie Rokem's *Philosophers and Thespians: Thinking Performance*, and Paul Woodruff's *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched*—have suggested the exegetical benefits of putting theater and philosophy in dialogue. If we emphasize the monologic mode of the opening gambit of *Discourse on Method*—if we focus on a solipsistic method

and the individual "I" that governs the *Meditations*—we may be surprised by the extent to which Descartes dwells, in his last texts, on others, on interaction, even on intersubjectivity. In *The Aesthetic Body* Erec R. Koch reminds us that the Cartesian subject is "passionately shaped by contact with others, by socialization. Interaction with other subject-bodies enters into the play of forces and stimuli that act on the individual and that provoke sensation and passion."[23] Here, I take up the transformative effects of such contact between subjects: onstage and offstage subjects but also the subjects of theater and philosophy. I foreground the perceptions and emotions—both, we will see, are for Descartes representations—that mediate between two parties in an encounter, each an audience to the other's performance. Looking beyond the monologic mode, I identify in late Descartes a performative or dialogic mode and define and enlist its epistemological benefits.

It is no accident that Descartes's ideas matured through his intersubjective exchange with Elisabeth—the person, he said, who understood his philosophy better than anyone else.[24] In dedicating his *Principles of Philosophy* to her, Descartes acknowledged this exchange and even adumbrated the very epistemological distinctions between monologue and dialogue, archive and repertory, that I am deploying here. "The greatest advantage I have received from the writings that I have previously published," he writes, "has been the honor of becoming known to your highness, and of being able to speak with her. It has allowed me to observe in her qualities so rare and so estimable that I believe it does a service to the public to propose them as an example to posterity."[25] Even taking into consideration the rhetorical flourishes of its genre (and those of courtly flattery), the dedication is remarkable. It performs two maneuvers. First, it subordinates the value of his published work to the advantage it has gained him: conversation with Elisabeth. His books have facilitated exchange with her, an exchange he values as "the greatest advantage." And he implicitly recognizes this experience, this intersubjective encounter, as a valuable way of knowing. (The scientific method of late Descartes stresses experiential knowledge; he frequently employs the word *expérience*, which, tellingly, means both "experience" and "experiment.") Some of the epistemological benefits of this encounter, in turn, he hopes to contain for his readers, for "posterity." At the same time, he tacitly acknowledges the difficulty of this

containment, suggesting the drawback of a performative episteme. Performance, we know, evanesces. We can never recuperate the experience, or even the content, of Descartes's conversations with Elisabeth, especially their in-person conversations in Holland.[26] However, traces remain. Extant letters provide a written dialogue of considerable hermeneutic significance. The difficulty is in remaining attuned to their performative potential. The letters provide us texts for analysis, to be sure, but they also alert us to new ways of knowing Descartes.

When Elisabeth was asked to publish her letters to Descartes, after his untimely death in 1650, she declined. His letters to her were published in 1657.[27] As a result philosophers were left quite literally with another monologue (one with a confusing dramatic structure, since the ordering of the letters was incorrect),[28] and the conclusion of the mid-nineteenth-century critic Gottschalk Eduard Guhrauer was that philosophy would "forever mourn the absence" of the other voice.[29] Forever lasted just over two hundred years: the discovery of Elisabeth's letters in the 1870s by an antiquarian book dealer led to their publication, in 1879, by Alexandre Foucher de Careil (and to the dates of Descartes's own letters being corrected).[30] This event, in turn, opened a vista into the *Passions*, which the letters had spawned, and led more generally to the reassessment of Cartesian thought that we see, for example, in Brown's *Descartes and the Passionate Mind*. In transforming a monologue back into a dialogue, Elisabeth's letters reorient both Descartes and his readers away from the language of objectivity and generality. She shifts the universal subject—the "I" of the *Meditations*—back to a properly subjective one. Her constant appeals to her own bodily experience remind Descartes that he had set out to displace Scholastic axioms with personal observation, *expérience*; she grounds his sometimes unworldly philosophy in the world and its stimuli, returning him to the notion that knowledge inheres in the (sometimes passive) interaction of the mind with things from outside of it. In turn she alerts us to the epistemological benefits of performance. More particularly, Elisabeth's correspondence with Descartes helps us to understand another Cartesian theater not only because of what the two writers say about it. The letters' dialogic form illuminates a concern with intersubjectivity that is particularly germane in light of the dynamic exchange between actors and spectators.

The poetics of performance that emerges from Descartes's dialogue with Elisabeth is the subject of my first chapter. Elisabeth had suggested the inadequacies of mind-body dualism by pressing him on the question of health, seeing correctly that an ailing body might find its reason impaired. Descartes built on this insight in *The Passions of the Soul*, stressing how good health might be seen as evidence of mind-body union and highlighting the emotions' role in guaranteeing it. These ideas find expression in the ballet *The Birth of Peace*, whose libretto Descartes is said to have written and whose 1649 performance at the court of Queen Christina I imagine with the help of research conducted in Stockholm and Uppsala. The ballet celebrates the end of the Thirty Years' War, in which Descartes had himself served and which profoundly shaped his thinking; its end made possible the new philosophical order that the ballet represents and in many ways inaugurates. Thematizing mind-body union in the embodied form of ballet, *The Birth of Peace* argues for—and, more crucially, demonstrates—the health benefits of joy, perhaps especially for the disabled soldiers it audaciously represents. In May 1641 Descartes had written to Henricus Regius that "I am one of those who deny that man understands with the body," and this letter has been cited in the scholarship hundreds if not thousands of times.[31] But despite the collective force of this reiteration, it overlooks how much of late Descartes speaks precisely to the body's central role in understanding. The ballet, like Descartes's correspondence with Elisabeth, restores the body to a place of prominence by showing also how it serves as the repository of experience and memory. And if experience (especially emotional experience) reshapes the body, as Descartes showed as early as his mechanistic *Treatise on Man*, theater, like ballet, could encourage salutary physical effects by providing joyful experience and building joyful memories.

The book's second section concerns playwriting after Descartes. It demonstrates how the much-discussed problem of dramatic catharsis originates in an incommensurability produced by Cartesianism, since the universal experience of pity and fear theorized by Aristotle cannot be reconciled with an audience of individualized subjects. Pierre Corneille responded to this incommensurability in his play *Nicomède*, whose script I analyze alongside two of its performances: one at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1651, the other at the Louvre in 1658. The playwright's diminution of

pity and fear and his concomitant elevation of emotional wonder sought to overcome the philosophical difficulties that Descartes presented for tragic playwriting. Previous critics have dwelt on the question of whether Descartes had read Corneille's work or Corneille had read Descartes's, or on the question of whether the two shared a common influence, such as François de Sales.[32] By contrast, Gustave Lanson—who inaugurated this line of scholarly inquiry in 1894 by first connecting the two figures—famously declared that Cartesian philosophy and *grand siècle* French literature developed as "effects of the same causes" and "independent expressions of the same spirit."[33] I have followed the lead of Ernst Cassirer, who took up Lanson's thesis in his book *Descartes: Doctrine—Personality—Influence*. Juxtaposing representative details from philosophy and theater of the period, I trace their consonances, explore the similar cultural work they performed, and thus demonstrate how a new worldview came to be consolidated. Descartes and Descartes-influenced playwrights initiated paradigm shifts in philosophy and tragedy, respectively, and the undeniable harmony of these shifts is made plain in Corneille's deviations from classical form. For Corneille reconfigures tragedy in order to foreground wonder, the precise emotion that Descartes located at the center of his emotional physics and moral philosophy. And thus Corneille wrapped his "ingenious fictions" (as Charles Perrault would have it)[34] around a truth of both nature and morality that had been lately conceived. These Cartesian innovations, theorized in Corneille's copious theoretical writings, were in turn mimicked in English theater and dramatic theory of the period—especially that of John Dryden, whose *Of Dramatick Poesie, an Essay* (1665) and *The Conquest of Granada* (1671) I discuss.

The book's third section concerns acting after Descartes. It considers the Cartesian notion of interiority, whose ramifications for bodily representation can be glimpsed in a series of English rehearsal burlesques of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671), the anonymously written *The Female Wits* (1696), and Samuel Foote's *Diversions of the Morning* (1747). I explore these burlesques' borrowings from Molière's metatheatrical entertainment *The Versailles Impromptu* (1663). Representing the relationship between actors' interiority and their physiological onstage expressions, Molière's entertainment anticipated the terms worked out in Charles Le Brun's treatise

on art, *Conference on General and Particular Expression* (1668), famous for inspiring early treatises on "natural" acting in both France and England, such as Foote's own *Treatise on the Passions* (1747). Le Brun deviated from previous work on emotional expression in the arts by depending not on observation but on a reasoned argument derived from Cartesian first principles.[35] But Le Brun's theory was unable to account for the particularities of mind-body union, a deficiency diagnosed already by his contemporary André Félibien, who found Le Brun to miss the *je ne sais quoi*—that "which cannot be properly expressed" and which he analogizes to "the secret knot that joins the two parts of body and spirit [*esprit*]."[36] What supplies this *je ne sais quoi* on the stage is, of course, the actor, whose mind-body union came to be celebrated by the public. It is no coincidence that the period saw the rehabilitation of the actor's reputation.[37] In the century after Descartes's death a picture of actors as inherently more passionate than nonactors—and therefore more dangerous—transforms radically into a picture of actors in greater control of their emotional channels, a control all the more remarkable since these channels are so well-trafficked as a result of the actors' emoting on the stage.

The book's fourth section concerns theater architecture after Descartes. In Cartesian theory the physiology of perception—in which the eye apprehends an external stimulus and relays it to the brain by a process he called representation—is inextricably connected with the physiology of emotion, which represents feeling by means of animal spirits in the blood vessels. Jean Racine's *Phèdre*, I demonstrate, stages this tension between ocular and sanguinary representation, but the play's precise theatrical meanings are determined by the anatomies of the theaters in which it is enacted. I show how several spaces collectively trace the development of a Cartesian theater architecture. First, I anatomize the Hôtel de Bourgogne, site of *Phèdre*'s debut. The space retained the memory of an earlier kind of theatergoing, with its intermingling actors and spectators (allowed not only to sit on the stage but also to wander backstage if the mood struck); it thus encouraged its inhabitants to perform the same seepages—between self and other, inner and outer, individual and collective—that the play's characters understand as passionate, bloody contamination. Racine disavowed such seepage and protested that the play was meant only to "visually present" the passions, "to show all the disorder they create."[38] Such a

presentation was better facilitated by new theater designs of the period, with their ocular spaces and corneal proscenium arches. I consider the Comédie-Française (designed by François d'Orbay), which Racine's play inaugurated in 1689, and London's Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket (designed by John Vanbrugh), home to *Phèdre*'s English premiere in 1707 in an adaptation by Edmund Smith. One of Phaedra's messages, we will see, is that she always exceeds the boundaries of her self, no matter how desperately they are policed. It is meant to be rhetorically productive, then, that the play spills out of its chapter and into the epilogue, in which I consider the contemporary Cineplex. There, Helen Mirren's performance as Phaedra (in a production directed by Nicholas Hytner) was given a "live re-broadcast" to audiences in 2010 while Mirren shot a film in Hungary, her corporal integrity intact even as close-ups severed her head from her body.

Each of these four spaces offers wildly divergent experiences to theatergoers, and this bodily experience, Descartes teaches, shapes our way of seeing and constitutes our own corporal memory. Experience has taught me that my endeavor in this book requires some justification, perhaps because of the villainous role that Descartes has been made to play in critical theory in recent decades. An age of representation, the seventeenth century understood experience as subjective, and this understanding forever changed how theatrical representation and reception would operate. Descartes was a key player in this new understanding, and he therefore warrants a place in our theater histories; some of the most ostensibly classical elements of these histories appear rather different when examined in the light of Cartesian philosophy. These histories leave Descartes out precisely because of their reliance on the archive; after all, he wrote little about the theater. As theater scholars have apprehended the lessons of performance studies, however, they have moved beyond written records and physical monuments and understood a much broader range of mnemonic materials as constituting the history of the practice. And by turning to this broader range of materials—to speech, to images, to gestures[39]—we see more clearly the contribution of Descartes (along with his frequent interlocutor, Elisabeth of Bohemia) to some of the most vexing theoretical debates and puzzling material changes in theater history. The book's structure reflects this focus: I analyze a series of performance events with

dates ranging from 1649 to 2010. So I turn to December 9, 1649, when Antoine Beaulieu's dancers slipped into their masks for *The Birth of Peace*, but Descartes demurred. I turn to October 14, 1663, when Molière directed his actor Marquise-Thérèse de Gorla in the *salle de la comédie* at Versailles and gave her a perplexing note about her acting: "sometimes violence to ourselves is necessary."[40] I turn to April 18, 1689, when the stage decorators at the Comédie-Française's first permanent home readied a set for Racine's *Phèdre* that was markedly different from that used in the play's 1677 premiere, and to later that day, when spectators took their seats by a markedly different path through the theater. Each of these moments, we will see, can be illuminated by "reread[ing] Descartes a little," as Luce Irigaray has advised us to do in a landmark essay.[41] So, too, can we illuminate other moments, farther afield and less long ago, as I demonstrate when the book makes excursions away from Paris, to Stockholm, to Toronto, and especially to London.

These moments, I show, can illuminate Descartes too. They can help us in our rereading.

We are told by Sophie of Hanover, heiress to the English throne and the mother of George I, that her sister Elisabeth of Bohemia once acted in Corneille's *Médée* in a private performance.[42] But Elisabeth's interest in the theater, at least one of her biographers notes, was displaced by an interest in philosophy once she had met Descartes.[43] I believe that theater and philosophy need not be mutually exclusive interests or endeavors. In *The Mind-Body Stage* I harvest the insights into performance offered by Elisabeth's dialogue with Descartes; I nudge an important and underrecognized philosopher back into performance with her favorite scene partner. Elisabeth's insights enriched Descartes's thought, and they help us to recognize the debt that theater history and practice owe him. I also ask him to make good on a debt to theater historians and practitioners. It is a commitment made in one of his earliest texts, from 1619. Let it serve as a cue: "So far, I have been a spectator in this theater which is the world, but I am now about to mount the stage."[44]