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Abstract

Contemporary Political Theatre and the Collaborative Making Process

This paper will be delivered in the form of a presentation in which I will show extracts of my practice which will form the basis of my discussion of the following research concerns.

Contemporary performance, which prioritizes the making processes of an ensemble over a commitment to an exploration of meaning in an extant script or text, is often contextualised academically with reference to poststructuralist theories. The question arises as to whether performance 'made' in such a way is able to engage with a conventional (or Marxist) notion of the political without the guiding overview of the playwright's structure.

This question is central to my own collaborative making processes. Habermas's notion of communicative action provides a key theoretical backbone to my practice as research. Communicative action and its emphasis on the progressive possibilities of dialogue are central to Habermas's theoretical reformulation of Marxist ideology. The precise critical question at the heart of my practice as research is how to investigate Habermas's political concept through performance strategies which might best be understood as arising out of, or sympathetic to poststructuralist theory. The intention of my investigations is not to rehearse the stale mate between the modern and the postmodern, but rather to question how particular progressive attempts towards active political change (which might be understood as a Marxist approach) and self reflexive critiques of the operations of texts (commonly understood as poststructuralist concerns) might work together in performance.