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The Poetics of Immanence: Performance Theatre of Forced Entertainment

Abstract

The present dissertation thesis examines the multi-faceted nature of the devised as well as durational works of the British experimental theatre Forced Entertainment via the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The aim of the thesis is to explore the transformation-potentiality of the territory between the actors and the spectators. The transformativity of this interspace, or the territory in-between, is decodable namely via Forced Entertainment's performances' structural patterns, sympathy fostering aesthetics, virtual audience integration and accentuated emphasis of the now. The application of Deleuze's philosophy, chiefly the phenomenon of immanence, results in the definition of the poetics of immanence, whose operation enables the transformativity of theatrical space to be terminologically embraced.

After delineating crucial terms, such as performance and theatre, live art, or postdramatic theatre, the initial chapter contextualizes Forced Entertainment as the pivotal experimental theatre group; the chapter further conducts an analysis of relevant critical literature in performance and theatre theory discourse. Chapter two provides a deeper contextualising study of the most significant Deleuzoguattarian concepts of rhizome, deterritorialization, becoming, haecceity and immanence; these concepts are further analysed within the framework of performance and theatre. The third chapter maps the fiction and performance-related textual works of Tim Etchells, the director of Forced Entertainment, and examines the transformative appeal and the performativity embedded in them which the application of Deleuzoguattarian philosophy enables to clarify. Chapters four and five examine via Deleuzoguattarian methodological apparatus the company's performance productions from the last two decades, the former focusing on devised standard length projects, the latter dealing with conceptual and durational projects of up to 24 hours long.

The present dissertation thesis is a Deleuzian transversal interconnecting two seemingly distant phenomena – theatre and philosophy. Based on this alliance, the conclusions suggest that the transformative potential of process based non-linear contemporary devised theatre is palpable through the concept of immanence as advocated by Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze understands immanence as the quality which helps to oppose the chaos inherent in creating

meanings. Deleuze's philosophy is a tool used to embrace new concepts; therefore its application in contemporary performance practice discourse is relevant. Like theatre, philosophy is a living, organic and productive process. Thinking means becoming somebody else. Theatre understood via philosophy and vice versa brings thus new, creative alliances. The theatre of Forced Entertainment, due to its inherent interconnectedness and imperfectness, demonstrating the elements of the poetics of immanence, can reveal glimpses of *a* life within a theatrical experience. Such immanent performance theatres lead to a transformative experience.

Key words

Forced Entertainment, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, immanence, performance, theatre, rhizome, becoming, deterritorialization, failure.