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PROFILE

Project Title

Performing Knowledge:
Contemporary Lecture Performances and the Politics of Knowledge in Cognitive Capitalism

Supervisors

Prof Tony Fisher and Prof Bryce Lease

Abstract

Today the lecture performance has become a fixture in the by-programs of museums, galleries, theatres, and performance festivals, as well as in academic conferences and seminars: the lecture performance straddles the intersections between art and academia and combines academic analysis and performative intervention into traditional presentations of knowledge. My thesis investigates how the ubiquity of the form belies its complexity: Drawing on developments in theories of knowledge production – Jon McKenzie's focus on performance and managerial knowledge, Yann Moulier-Boutang's cognitive capitalism, as well as post-Fordist ideas of labour as performance – it argues that the hybrid-status of the lecture performance, positioned between lecturing and art practice, ideally situates it to study contemporary knowledge politics. By investigating the different ways in which lecture performances stage knowledge, I show how the form reproduces modes of knowledge marketisation and standardisation on the one hand, and how it acts as critique of these processes on the other.

Focusing on case studies from contemporary dance and performance as well as current academic practices, I argue that the lecture performance is both an agent and a consequence of cultural politics driven by economic rationalisation and the insertion of entrepreneurial logic into the artistic and academic field. My PhD thesis focuses on the intersections between knowledge production, theatre, and the economic developments that increasingly commodify knowledge, such as the marketisation of education. It understands the lecture performance as a paradoxical form simultaneously invested in diversifying knowledge – to include corporeal, experiential, and collective ways of knowing, while also susceptible to logics of market economies – driven by platform capitalism and digitalisation – which foster epistemological and economic inequalities.

Profile

I am currently a part-time PhD candidate at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, where I am the recipient of the Shepherd Studentship. My research and teaching are interested in situating performance among relational systems of material, cultural and infrastructural power. Using performance as a method as well as an object of study, I work in interdisciplinary frameworks – integrating performance analysis, cultural politics, and political economy. My PhD research builds on my Diploma in Dramaturgy from the University of Munich, Germany, and MA in Theatre and Performance Studies at the Graduate Centre of the City University of New York, USA. In both degrees I focused on how performance navigates cultural and social inequality, analysing how models of neoliberal participation stratify audiences and how structural inequalities shape experiences of intimacy on social media. Through these research projects, I have a good grounding in cultural policy, the sociology of inequality, and design studies.

Collaboration is central to my academic practice: I am a founding member of the 'Performance and Political Economy Working Group' (London, 2018-present). The group organises regular reading groups, and research symposia and has published a co-written article. As editor of *Platform: Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts* (2018-2021), I co-edited multiple themed issues to showcase the work of postgraduate and early career researchers. As the editorial assistant for *Contemporary Theatre Research* (2017-21), I have also gained experience in coordinating a large international team of scholars and editors.

Selected Publications

'Share Your Work: Lola Arias' Lecture Performance Series and the Artistic Cognitariat of the Global Pandemic', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 31, no.4 (Dec. 2021): 471-95.

'Marxist Keywords in Performance', co-authored with Jaswinder Blackwell-Pal, Michael Shane Boyle, Ash Dilks, Caoimhe Mader McGuinness, Olive Mckeen, Lisa Moravec, Alessandro Simari, and Martin Young, *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 36, no. 1 (Nov. 2021): 25-53.

'Designing the Female Orgasm: Situating the Sexual Entrepreneur in the Online Sex-Education Platform OMGYes', co-authored with Nell Beecham (LSE), *Design Issues*, Special Issue on "Design and Inequality", 35, no. 4 (Autumn 2019): 42-51.

'SHOOT HIM NOW!!! Anonymity, accountability and online spectatorship in Wafaa Bilal's *Domestic Tension*', *International Journal of Performance Art and Digital Media* 11, no. 2 (Nov 2015): 202-18. (Won the 2015 New Scholar's Prize awarded by the International Federation of Theatre Research).

Teaching

Trained as a dramaturg, I have an extensive record teaching record in Higher Education - with a special interest in bridging theory and practice. I teach performance theory and practice across a range of BA and MA programmes in multiple London-based universities and drama schools. Prior to moving to the UK in 2017, I worked as a graduate teaching fellow and teaching assistant in Germany, the USA, and Canada, giving me an international outlook and the ability to adapt well to different institutional and cultural contexts. My pedagogy is built on encouraging students to engage with the social, political, and material aspects of performance, inviting them to apply these insights to their own theatrical and cultural practice.

Teaching Expertise:

- Performance History and Analysis
- Cultural Policy and Institutional Politics
- Curating Dance and Performance Art
- Performance and Political Economy
- Dramaturgy
- Digital Theatre
- Solo Performance

Practice

Dramaturgy

I work as a freelance dramaturg with directors, writers, and choreographers on a variety of projects (from traditional play dramaturgy, novel adaptations, new playwriting, and contemporary dance) in Munich, New York, and London. Venues, where my collaborations were shown, include: Reaktorhalle, Munich; Dixon Place, New York City; The Flea Theatre, New York City; and RCSSD, London. I am currently the dramaturg for Close Encounters Theatre, an English-speaking theatre company in Zurich, Switzerland.

Translation

I work with publishing houses (including Routledge and Suhrkamp) and authors to translate plays and academic texts in theatre, dance, and performance studies from English to German and copy-edit translations from German to English for continuity and style

Expertise and Public Engagement

In 2018, I participated in the Mellon School of Theatre and Performance Research at Harvard University, USA, a summer school training participants in 'public humanities'.

My research has been showcased as a TEDx talk at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (2018, [link on this page](#)). My talk, entitled 'Would Shakespeare have given a TED talk?' ([link on this page](#)) takes up a portion of my PhD research and asks how contemporary dramaturgies of knowledge (such as the very familiar TED format) are implicated in the commodification of knowledge. It is a TEDx talk about TED talks, a lecture performance about popular lecture performances.

In 2022, I was invited to give the keynote address at a symposium at the Kunsthalle Mainz, Germany, in conjunction with an exhibition by Walid Raad. My presentation was entitled 'Consuming Art / Consuming Knowledge. The Lecture Performance between Art and Marketization'.

I have been the recipient of the IFTR New Scholars Prize (2015), as well as the TaPRA Postgraduate Essay Prize 2013. In 2023 I was shortlisted for the BBC/AHRC New Generation Thinkers Scheme.