Cripping Acting: Troubling Ocularcentric Performance

Amelia is a blind theatre practitioner with experience in various styles of performance including but not limited to: acting, music, burlesque and aerial circus. She is also a workshop facilitator, visiting lecturer and a consultant for performance, and disability studies/culture. She has worked in both disability led and mainstream settings, and it is through these experiences that her research has come to fruition.

ABSTRACT

This practice-as-research proposal aims to identify, trouble and subvert the dominantly visual structures that exist within acting process and representation through my experience as a blind theatre practitioner. I am labeling these structures as “ocularcentric,” meaning that there is a privileging of sight over the other senses, and that this privileging is a normative structure of able-bodiedness that both actors and audience are expected to meet. I argue that when an actor such as myself is unable to meet a privileged expectation of sight, the processes by which acting occurs and the subsequent representation of character within a performance have the potential to shift, rupture or fail all together. This trouble may then be able to raise wider questions surrounding some of the normative structures within acting process and the implications that these structures have on wider concepts of representation.

The nature of this research will be interdisciplinary. I am beginning with my experiences as a blind actor, and using methodologies within disability studies to invert and critique normative ocular structures within acting. The section of disability studies on which I am particularly focused is crip theory, a relatively new discourse in disability studies that openly borrows from various sources such as queer theory, feminist studies and other identity based theories. By claiming a crip identity as a disabled woman, and by interacting with various understandings of representations within a theatrical context, I automatically question normative, able-bodied structures. In other words, by being a crip actor, I crip acting. Through practical research, I aim to document how I crip acting in order to identify what that criping does or fails to do to ocular expectations within acting processes, as well as creation and representation of character.

PUBLICATIONS


CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Cripping Acting: Troubling Ocularcentric Performance” IFTR, University of Warwick
“Shifts in Social Dynamics: Pitch Black Theatre and Visual Impairment” Theatre In the Dark Symposium, University of Surrey.

TEACHING AREAS/EXPERTISE

Acting
Improvisation (Music and acting)
Singing
Disability Studies/Crip Theory
Devised Theatre
Access (audio description)