



Charlotte Gruber

InterActions

Performing Actual and Virtual Spaces as Stages of Inter-est



AGENT
Amsterdam New Theses in Performance Research

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Editorial Note

The book series *AGENT. New Theses in Performance Research* aims to provide a public forum for the dissemination of excellent research in the field of Theatre and Performance Studies. It encourages outstanding young researchers to contribute their Master and PhD dissertations focussing on topics related to dance, theatre and performance in a global context, as well as music theatre, video art, installation art, activist performances and digital theatre. These works are written in English or Dutch and are informed by philosophical approaches to aesthetics and ethics, by sociological and political concepts as well as critical postcolonial, queer and gender theories. Access to such research texts brings a knowledge of historiographical and theoretical foundations to the public.

AGENT. New Theses in Performance Research is a co-operation between Belgium and The Netherlands – two countries internationally known for their innovative and radical forms of experimental theatre. The editors of this series, Prof. dr. Kati Röttger (chair of the Institute of Theatre Studies at the University of Amsterdam) and Prof. dr. Katharina Pewny (Professor for Performance Studies at the University of Gent) champion international work on theatre and performance and promote its mediation in English, Dutch and German languages.

Katharina Pewny and Kati Röttger

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Volume 2

Kati Röttger and Katharina Pewny, Eds.

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AGENT - Amsterdam/Gent New Theses in Performance Research

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PREFACE

The second issue in our series is an outstanding and elucidating example of the increasing internationalization Theatre and Performance Studies is currently undergoing. Coming from Berlin, Germany, Charlotte Gruber finished a one year Master Theatre Studies at the University in Amsterdam, Netherlands, that resulted in the Master Thesis published here. Next to Lonneke van Heugten, the author of our first issue, she won the Performance Studies Thesis Price awarded by the Dutch Theatre Institute (TIN), in the following year 2012. The excellence of her research brought her to Theatre Studies Ghent, Belgium, where she was awarded a scholarship by the Ghent University Research Fund BOF to work on her PhD Thesis: "Antigone in/as Transition. A Study on the Performing Arts Status Quo in Europe". This project supervised by Katharina Pewny is estimated to be completed in 2016. Consequently, this issue is a special proof of the new cooperation between Theatre Studies Amsterdam and Theatre Studies Ghent that is generated by the AGENT Series.

But not only the personal trajectory of Charlotte Gruber tends to be international and interdisciplinary; also the topic of her former and current research goes into that direction. She is dealing with a phenomenon that she observes to be an international tendency in contemporary performances: that the art of performing spaces creates novel spaces by the means of performance. She approaches theatre as a political medium following Hannah Arendt's concepts of inter-esse and interaction as constitutive for a 'space of appearance' to define a public sphere where politics happen. Complementing this perspective with spatial, cultural-philosophical and media-critical concepts of Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord,

Steven Best and Douglas Keller, she categorizes as well 'actual' as 'virtual' performed spaces as 'stages of inter-est'. These form the methodological tools to demonstrate that "the performing arts, in particular performances at innovative venues, provide broad potential to create or reinvent public spaces, actual as well as virtual, and to invert alienation" (p. 7).

To prove her hypothesis, she engages convincingly with a great variety of performances from all over the world. In a clearly structured way, she carefully outlines her philosophical framework, to analyze then diverse forms of both; performed actual spaces (chapter 3.1.) and performed virtual spaces (chapter 3.2.). Starting with two international performances of the German group Rimini Protokoll, Torero Portero and Cuidades Paralelas, she travels then from the Dutch performance *Amen is af* by PeerGroup to Brazil, to discuss Teatro da Vertigem's performance *Br-3* that partly takes place on the river Tietê in Sao as examples of what she calls "Reality and Documentary Performances". The next category she opens up is "Physical Theatre and Modern Mime", providing insights in a performance of Dutch performer Boukje Schweigman, called *Ruim*. The third category is about "Experiment Performance" and enhances *U bevindt zich hier* by Dutch artist Dries Verhoeven. The reflection on the performance of virtual spaces includes "Web Site Performances" (with global projects by JR and Miranda July), "Movement Tracking Performances", (including projects by Marie Sester and Camille Utterback), and finally "Communication Media Performances" analyzing *Riderspoken* by Blasttheory and *We are Forests* by Circumstance.

Charlotte Gruber's approach can be called innovative because it certainly contributes to the emerging field to the so called Spatial Turn in Theatre and Performance Studies insights that go beyond the still most widely untouched border between material and virtual theatre spaces.

Within her currently ongoing PhD research, the author further works on contemporary performance, and she broadens the perspective by including Antigone-performances from different origins, for example from Israel and Palestine. Examining the crossroads of performance and philosophy, the lack of analyses of

contemporary Antigone performances that was already remarked upon in 1991 (Loroux 1991), and since then still has not been adequately addressed, is a starting point of this PhD thesis. In it, the researcher brings together politics and psychoanalysis/philosophy from a Performance Studies perspective. Antigone in/as Transition's research goals are threefold: First, it aims to provide a systematic and comparative analysis of representative Antigone performances in Europe and in transcontinental contexts. Second, it aims to provide a Performance Studies contribution to a new wave of Antigone Studies. Third it aims to reach out for critical conclusions on the socio-political meaning of Antigone today, concerning the act of articulating and/or intervening in certain narratives and hegemonies by means of both: art-practice and academics.

The working process already forms a trace through the issues involved, for it leads its author from Gender Studies to psychoanalysis, from postcolonial performance to the canon of European philosophy, from Ghent to Palestine, from the Occupy Movement to Oxford University, from Amsterdam to Ghent.

Kati Röttger, Amsterdam and Katharina Pewny, Ghent

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I want to thank all my teachers at the Brandenburgische Technische Universität Cottbus, where I did my Bachelor in the very young field of Culture and Technology and of course at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, where I got the opportunity to specialize in Theatre Studies and Performance Research during my Master. My special thanks goes to those who supervised this thesis: Prof. Dr. Kati Röttger and Dr. Bram van Oostveldt, who provided me with steady inspiration and thorough critical remarks. Especially Kati Röttger, who mentioned a quote by Arendt in one of her lectures (the cornerstone of this thesis), suggested the application for the TIN Scriptieprijs and together with Prof. Dr. Katharina Pewny made possible the publication of this thesis and constantly encourages my academic career up to the present day. I also want to thank Katharina Pewny alongside Kati Röttger, Kristoffel Demoen and Freddy Decreus for the great opportunity and exciting experience to continue this journey by doing my doctorate research at the Universiteit Gent, and for enthusiastically supervising this research. I especially thank Katharina Pewny for the engagement in developing this broad and thrilling project and for supporting me with diversified challenges, reliable advice and a magnitude of inspiring possibilities which I really enjoy.

My gratitude also goes to the Theaterinstituut Nederland in Amsterdam, which is a versatile well organized archive, where I found a lot of the material used within this thesis. Furthermore I am thankful for their *TIN Theaterscriptieprijs* and the people involved. This is a great platform to acknowledge and support new research.