

# TDR

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**Richard K. Sherwin**

**Imke van Heerden,**

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**and Anil Bas**

*TDR Comment by*

**David Savran**



# TDR

TDR is scholarly, accessible, and dynamic. TDR is inclusive and interdisciplinary. Each article is tightly focused—but taken as a whole TDR is global. With its broad range of topics, TDR is at the cutting edge of performance studies. Its writers and editors support progressive political and social movements, art and ideas. Written by and for scholars and artists—and their students—TDR is where leaders and future leaders in the field of performance studies go for performance texts, performative writing, editorials, reviews, interviews, and research articles about the performing arts, performance in everyday life, popular entertainments, sports, business, and politics—the broad spectrum of performance.

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# TDR

*the journal of performance studies*

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**Above:** *In Free Prisoners* by Ahmad Al-Enezī, the figures in the Artist's paintings (*Donya Al-Enezī and Namāriq 'Adil*) struggle with each other. Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 26 November 2022. See "Saudi Arabia's *Jawqat al-Masrah* (Theatre Choir Club): An Interview with Director Turki Bā'Issa" by Richard Schechner. (Photo courtesy of the Sharm el-Sheikh International Theatre Festival for Youth)

**Front Cover:** Wu Hsing-kuo as the cast-off child in *Tuibian*, National Theatre, Taipei, 2013. See "Performing the Insect and Its Mysterious Metamorphosis" by Catherine Diamond. (Photo by Kuo Cheng-chan; courtesy of Contemporary Legend Theatre)

**Back Cover:** Faye Driscoll's *Come On In*. Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, 2021–2022. See "Please Don't Touch the Artwork: Abstraction, Control, and Faye Driscoll's *Come On In*" by Miriam Felton-Dansky. (Detail from the photo by Mario Gallucci)

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*David Savran*

## ARTICLES

- Action and Event: The Social Theoretical Precursors of Performance Theory** .....7  
*Pannill Camp*

Familiar accounts of the intellectual origins of performance theory downplay the ideas inherited from Durkheimian and Marxian social theory by way of British social anthropology. Structural functionalism as taught by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and the Marx-inflected social anthropology of Max Gluckman are key but underappreciated junctures between classical social theory and performance theory. This lineage helps explain the ongoing tension in performance theory regarding the role embodied communicative action plays in maintaining or altering social order. It also casts new light on the use of the language of “action” and “event” to describe performance phenomena.

- Body as Artifact: A Value-Theoretical Reading of Ana Mendieta and Cassils.** .....25  
*Savannah Whaley*

Reading Ana Mendieta’s *Untitled: Glass on Body Imprints* (1972), Cassils’s *Becoming an Image* (2012–present), and Cassils’s *Pressed* (2018) through Marxian “value theory” makes the gendered body visible as an “artifact”: a result rather than a precondition of the capitalist mode of production. In this reading, Mendieta and Cassils convey a “felt sense” of the relationship between the particularities of sensory embodied experience and the capitalist totality, where gender is produced and maintained through indirect compulsions and direct forms of violence.

- Please Don’t Touch the Artwork: Abstraction, Control, and Faye Driscoll’s *Come On In*** .....42  
*Miriam Felton-Dansky*

Choreographer and performance-maker Faye Driscoll’s performance installation *Come On In* (2020) offered spectators an aesthetic experience that included very little physical contact—yet investigated deeply the nature of physical touch. The sensation, artistic implications, and sociopolitical valences of touch provoke a rich and complex set of questions for considering artistic, physical, and gendered forms of control across performance and visual art, including abstract sculpture, a history into which Driscoll’s installation intervenes.

- Shadow Play: Loss and Performativity.** .....57  
*Amy Cook*

We perceive loss by tracing the contours of what we invent in its place. When a work of art invites spectators to engage with it, it offers them an opportunity to process loss. Such artworks can be theatrical, visual, or architectural—like a public memorial; what unites them is the experience of the spectator. Individual and personal experiences of grief connect with the social expressions of large-scale loss when the one shows up, fractal-like, in the details of the other.

**Performing the Insect and Its Mysterious Metamorphosis** .....72

*Catherine Diamond*

Insect metamorphosis fascinated Greek philosophers, bewildered Christian theologians, affirmed the beliefs of Chinese moralists, and continues to mystify science. Yet dramas representing human-animal transformations rarely involve insects. When they do appear, they usually serve as metaphors satirizing human flaws, but are also demeaning to the insect in their simplistic representation. In some 21st-century performances, however, that approach is evolving to better appreciate the multifarious intricacies of insect life.

**Performing the Post-Anthropocene: *AI: When a Robot Writes a Play*** .....104

*Imke van Heerden, Çağdaş Duman, and Anil Bas*

Promoted as the first theatrical play written by artificial intelligence, *AI: When a Robot Writes a Play* (2021) anticipates the post-Anthropocene in both content and form. The machine-generated script problematizes the necessity of human (including dramatic) activities and invites exploration of theatre's role in the post-anthropocentric condition. AI renders the stage as a transitional site—a potential gateway to other realities.

**Gut Feelings: Socio-Civic Response to Hunger in the Philippines** .....121

*Oscar T. Serquiña, Jr.*

At the height of the pandemic, Vice President Leni Robredo's supporters served *lugaw* to the starving people of the Philippines as a symbol of her grassroots leadership—despite detractors who disparaged the lowly porridge. State agents antagonized citizen-led community pantries and food banks, which persisted through the contributions of ordinary Filipinos. Filipinos came together to lead these various embodied practices to provide nourishment and ignite political action.

**Against Fatalism: Exercising Utopianism through Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed** .....141

*Guilherme E. Meyer*

From the birth of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) in the 1970s during the rise of fascism in Latin America until his death in 2009, Augusto Boal affirmed his utopian conviction that “another world is possible.” Born at a time that was hardly conducive to utopianism, TO offers us techniques through which to exercise utopianism in our fatalistic times, repairing our conviction that a more livable and just world is possible even as the Right tries to convince us of the opposite.

**Saudi Arabia's Jawqat al-Masrah (Theatre Choir Club): An Interview with Director Turki Bā'Issa** .....159

*Richard Schechner*

At the 2022 Sharm El-Sheikh International Theatre Festival for Youth, Saudi women performed in a public square without hijab. Al-Enezī's *al-Sujanā' al-abrār* (Free Prisoners) is not only about art and liberty, it enacts it.

**London Surprise Major** .....167

*Anna Aslanyan*

Bell ringing in Britain has featured in sociohistorical studies, but it has never been analyzed in detail as a variety of mass spectacle. The practice takes especially interesting forms in London, a city where the ringing of church bells has been part of everyday life for centuries. Grounded in physics, economics, and human geography, ringing is a unique kind of immersive site-specific performance, whose significance is best understood through pivoting to topography and history.

CONCERNING BOOKS

Performance Capital: Retailing Myth, Identity, and the Practices of Governance . . . . .181

*Richard K. Sherwin*

Assuming responsibility and developing the tools needed for self- and political construction are hallmarks of the liberal imagination. A newly emerging subfield of performance studies—call it “performance capital studies”—teaches us what those tools are and how they may be put to use. “Performance” now comes to be seen as an exchange of cultural, legal, and identity capital retailing different forms of knowledge and power in the constitution and regulation of governance.



*Filipinos line up for food and other aid at the Maginhawa Community Pantry, 20 April 2021. See “Gut Feelings: Socio-Civic Response to Hunger in the Philippines” by Oscar T. Serquiña, Jr. (Screenshot by Oscar T. Serquiña, Jr.)*