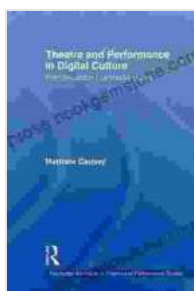


Performance Memory: Affect, Embodiment, and the Politics of the Past in Theatre Performance Studies

Performance memory is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been the subject of increasing interest in recent years. This interest is due in part to the growing recognition of the importance of memory in human experience and cognition, as well as the increasing use of performance as a tool for exploring and engaging with the past.

In theatre performance studies, performance memory has been explored in a variety of ways. Scholars have investigated the ways in which performance can be used to preserve and transmit memories of the past, as well as the ways in which performance can be used to challenge and disrupt dominant narratives about the past.



Anne Frank on the Postwar Dutch Stage: Performance, Memory, Affect (Routledge Advances in Theatre & Performance Studies) by Remco Ensel

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This article will provide an overview of the field of performance memory, with a particular focus on the ways in which performance memory has been used to explore the politics of the past. The article will begin by discussing the different ways in which performance can be used to access and represent the past. It will then explore the ways in which performance memory can be used to challenge and disrupt dominant narratives about the past. Finally, the article will consider the ethical and political implications of using performance memory to engage with the past.

Accessing and Representing the Past through Performance

Performance can be used to access and represent the past in a variety of ways. One way is through the use of historical documents and artifacts. By incorporating historical materials into their performances, artists can create works that are directly engaged with the past. For example, the playwright Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America* (1993) uses historical documents and speeches to explore the AIDS crisis in the United States.

Another way that performance can be used to access and represent the past is through the use of personal narratives. By sharing their own stories and experiences, performers can create works that are deeply personal and resonant. For example, the performer Anna Deavere Smith's play *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1993) is a series of monologues based on interviews with people who were affected by the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

Performance can also be used to access and represent the past through the use of ritual and ceremony. Rituals and ceremonies are often used to commemorate and remember important events from the past. By participating in these rituals and ceremonies, performers can create a sense of connection to the past and to those who came before them. For

example, the annual Day of the Dead festival in Mexico is a ritual that allows people to remember and celebrate their deceased loved ones.

Challenging and Disrupting Dominant Narratives about the Past

Performance can also be used to challenge and disrupt dominant narratives about the past. By presenting alternative perspectives and experiences, performers can challenge the ways in which the past has been remembered and represented. For example, the playwright August Wilson's play *The Piano Lesson* (1990) challenges the dominant narrative about the American South by presenting the lives and experiences of African American characters.

Performance can also be used to disrupt dominant narratives about the past by exposing the gaps and silences in the historical record. By bringing to light stories that have been marginalized or forgotten, performers can challenge the ways in which the past has been shaped and remembered. For example, the playwright Paula Vogel's play *The Baltimore Waltz* (1996) explores the experiences of women who were institutionalized for mental illness in the early 20th century.

Performance can also be used to disrupt dominant narratives about the past by creating new and alternative ways of remembering and representing the past. By using experimental and innovative performance techniques, artists can challenge the ways in which the past has been traditionally represented. For example, the choreographer William Forsythe's piece *In the Middle Somewhat Elevated* (1997) uses movement and music to create a new and abstract way of remembering and representing the Holocaust.

The Ethical and Political Implications of Using Performance Memory to Engage with the Past

The use of performance memory to engage with the past has a number of ethical and political implications. One of the most important ethical implications is the need to respect the experiences and memories of those who were affected by the past events being represented. Performers must be careful not to exploit or sensationalize these experiences, and they must always strive to represent them in a way that is respectful and dignified.

Another ethical implication of using performance memory to engage with the past is the need to be aware of the power of performance to shape and influence the way we remember and understand the past. Performers must be careful not to use their power to promote their own agendas or to manipulate the audience's emotions. They must always strive to use their power responsibly and ethically.

The use of performance memory to engage with the past also has a number of political implications. One of the most important political implications is the potential for performance to be used to challenge and disrupt dominant narratives about the past. By presenting alternative perspectives and experiences, performers can challenge the ways in which the past has been remembered and represented. This can be a powerful tool for social and political change.

Another political implication of using performance memory to engage with the past is the potential for performance to create new and alternative ways of remembering and representing the past. By using experimental and innovative performance techniques, artists can challenge the ways in which

the past has been traditionally represented. This can help to create a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the past.

Performance memory is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can be used to access and represent the past, to challenge and disrupt dominant narratives about the past, and to create new and alternative ways of remembering and representing the past.

The use of performance memory to engage with the past has a number of ethical and political implications. Performers must be careful to respect the experiences and memories of those who were affected by the past events being represented. They must also be aware of the power of performance to shape and influence the way we remember and understand the past. Finally, performers must use their power responsibly and ethically.

The use of performance memory to engage with the past has the potential to be a powerful tool for social and political change. By presenting alternative perspectives and experiences, performers can challenge the ways in which the past has been remembered and represented. By creating new and alternative ways of remembering and representing the past, performers can help to create a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the past.



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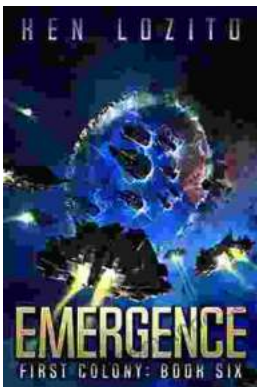
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