

Notes

- 1 M. Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 6–11.
- 2 J. Veltruský, "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre," in *Semiotics of Art*, ed. L. Matejka and J. R. Titunic (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 114ff.
- 3 Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, ed. O. Mann. 3 Vols. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1948), 246.
- 4 P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, "The Repertoire of Non-Verbal Behaviour: Categories, Origins, Usage and Coding," *Semiotica* I (1969), 49–98.

Chapter 78

Richard Schechner (b. 1934)

Theorist, playwright, and director Richard Schechner is one of the founders of performance studies in the United States. He is longstanding editor of the journal *TDR* (formerly the *Tulane Drama Review* and the *Drama Review*). His major works include *Public Domain* (1968), *Environmental Theater* (1973), *Essays on Performance Theory* (1976), *Between Theater and Anthropology* (1985), *The Future of Ritual* (1993), and *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002). Schechner advanced the science of performance studies by examining the idea of a performance in terms of its repeatability, doubling (copying from something else), and the connection between "acting" and "being." He is also an international stage director, his most well-known work being *Dionysus in 69* (1970), as well as founder of the Performance Group and East Coast Artist Exchange.

One of Schechner's principal contributions to performance studies is the concept of "restored behavior." It is the main characteristic of performance because it is behavior that can be "stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed." The process of rehearsal is the essential element of restored behavior, but it is not the only one. Rituals, funerals, and other physically recreated actions in specified spaces are what he calls "symbolic and reflexive" behavior which in turn becomes "the hardening into theater of social, religious, aesthetic, medical, and educational process. Performance means: never for the first time. It means: for the second to the *n*th time." Performance is thus "twice-behaved behavior."¹ A similar manner of examining performance is what Joseph Roach, another important founder of performance studies, calls "surrogation." Surrogation is a "three-sided relationship of memory, performance, and substitution." Cultures

reproduce and reinvent themselves by a process occurring "in the network of relations that constitute the social fabric." Surrogation, he says, appears in the "cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure," in which "survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternatives."² Performance is also linked to memory and history, what Roach calls "performance genealogies" that yield "the idea of expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words (or in the silences between them), and imaginary movements dreamed in minds not prior to language but constitutive of it" (26). In her examination of Latin American performance and culture, Diana Taylor adds along similar lines that "Performance and aesthetics of everyday life vary from community to community, reflecting cultural and historical specificity as much in the enactment as in the viewing/reception."³ In the following extract, Schechner traces the history of performance studies for which he, Roach, Taylor, and others have been leading advocates.

What is Performance Studies Anyway? (1998)

Is performance studies a "field," an "area," a "discipline?" The sidewinder snake moves across the desert floor by contracting and extending itself in a sideways motion. Wherever this beautiful rattlesnake points, it is not going there. Such (in)direction is characteristic of performance studies. This area/field/discipline often plays at what it is not, tricking those who want to fix it, alarming some, amusing others, astounding a few as it sidwinds its way across the deserts of academia. At present, in the United States, there are only two performance studies departments – full-fledged academic enterprises replete with chairpersons, the ability to tenure faculty, an independent budget, and so on. One of these, my own home base, is at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts; the other is at Northwestern University. It is worth sketching the development of these departments.

In 1965 Robert W. Corrigan founded the New York University School of the Arts. Corrigan had been at Tulane University, where he was my dissertation advisor/mentor. He was also the founding editor of the *Carleton Drama Review*, later the *Tulane Drama Review*, presently the *Drama Review (TDR)*, which I edited from 1962 to 1969 and again since 1986. In 1965 I published "Approaches" in *TDR*, an essay in which I said that performance was an inclusive category that included play, games, sports, performance in everyday life, and ritual. In 1967 Corrigan invited me to head the Drama Department in the NYU School of the Arts. I came with *TDR* but declined the headache of administration, suggesting instead Monroe Lippman, who had resigned as chair at Tulane. In 1968, we brought to NYU Brooks McNamara, a Tulane PhD, theatre historian, and scenographer. His passion was for popular entertainments, mine for the avant-garde and Greek theatre (a combination that bore fruit in *Dionysus in 69*). In the early 1970s, adding Michael Kirby and Ted Hoffman to the faculty, we moved further and further away from a conventional drama department. I taught courses in ritual, using anthropological thinking and joining forces with Victor Turner.

In 1979, with the strong support of David Oppenheim, who became dean of the School of the Arts in 1968 (Corrigan having gone on to found the California Institute of the Arts), I began a series of courses entitled Performance Theory. These were the kernel

of what was to become performance studies at NYU. As the flyer for the first such course proclaimed, "Leading American and world figures in the performing arts and the social sciences will discuss the relationship between social anthropology, psychology, semiotics, and the performing arts. The course examines theatre and dance in Western and non-Western cultures, ranging from the avant-garde to traditional, ritual, and popular forms." The visiting faculty for this initial offering included Jerzy Grotowski, Paul Bouissac, Donald Kaplan, Alexander Alland, Joann W. Kealinohomoku, Barbara Myerhoff, Jerome Rothenberg, Squat Theatre, and Victor Turner. Here, possibly for the first time together, were anthropologists, a Freudian psychoanalyst, a semiotician specializing in play and circus, a dance scholar, a poet and scholar of oral cultures and shamanism, and leading experimental theatre artists. The graduate assistant for the course was Sally Baner.

Over the next three years, Performance Theory counted among its visiting faculty Clifford Geertz, Masao Yamaguchi, Alfonso Ortiz, Erving Goffman, Eugenio Barba, Steve Paxton, Joanne Akalaitis, Yvonne Rainer, Meredith Monk, Augusto Boal, Colin Turnbull, Richard Foreman, Allan Kaprow, Linda Montano, Spalding Gray, Laurie Anderson, Peter Pitzele, Brian Sutton-Smith, Ray Birdwhistell, Edward T. Hall, Julie Taymor, and Peter Chelkowski. Victor and Edith Turner were frequent participants. Topics ranged from "Performing the Self" and "Play" to "Shamanism," "Cultural and Intercultural Performance," and "Experimental Performance."

By the end of the 1970s, we at NYU knew we weren't teaching "drama" or "theatre" in the ways it was taught elsewhere. Often we weren't teaching these subjects at all. So in 1980 we officially changed our name to Performance Studies. But we needed coherent leadership more than a name change. Enter Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, who came to NYU from the Department of Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania with a PhD in folklore from Indiana University. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's far-ranging interests spanned Jewish studies, museum displays (from colonial expositions to living history museums), tourist performances, and the aesthetics of everyday life. She became chair in the spring of 1981 and remained in the post for twelve years. It was Kirshenblatt-Gimblett who crafted a singular department out of what had been disparate and sometimes quirky interests and practices.

In such a short essay, I can't detail what happened from then to now. At NYU we follow a dictum of having people teach what is most important to them. We resist abstract plans. PS [Performance Studies] goes where faculty and student interests take it. We know that such a small department can't do it all, so we exist as a conscious partiality, a knowing slice of the pie. With the arrival of Marcia Siegel in 1983, dance was folded into the mix. When Peggy Phelan joined in 1985, a strong feminist tendency, informed by psychoanalysis, became a PS mainstay. Michael Taussig was at PS from 1988 to 1993, teaching his own conjunction of Marxism, postcolonial thought, and anthropology. Kenyan writer and activist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o holds a joint appointment from PS and Comparative Literature. Younger faculty May Joseph, José Muñoz, and Barbara Browning bring with them particular interests ranging from queer theory to samba. As of this writing, Diana Taylor is set to become chair. Because PS is in New York, we are able to draw a rich panoply of adjuncts, with interests ranging from Asian performance to jazz, orality to Artaud and Valerina, and much more.

What happened at Northwestern is parallel to but different from NYU. NYU's performance studies is rooted in theatre, NWU's [Northwestern University] in oral

interpretation. These are not only genres, but academic traditions. The theoretical and historical foundation of NWU's program is rhetoric, broadly understood. In a 1993 Internet discussion of "What Is Performance Studies?" Nathan Stucky of Southern Illinois University wrote (in part),

By the late 1960s and early 1970s many (then Oral Interpretation) programs were really practicing what was called "Performance of Literature." However, the view of literature quickly broadened to include cultural performances, personal narratives, everyday-life performances, non-fiction, ritual, etc. . . . By this point in time, ethnographic work, as well as folklore and anthropology, began to be of some interest. . . . So, along with the literary, theoretical, and critical models of performance that one might associate with "Interpretation" has been the emergence of interest in cultural and social elements, as well as interest in performance as a way of knowing. These threads connect logically and historically through relatively recent literary/critical foci to the oral tradition which has always been part of these approaches to performance.

In 1991 Dwight Conquergood, currently chair of NWU's Performance Studies Department and a major theorist of performance studies, raised what he called "new questions that can be clustered around five intersecting planes of analysis":

- 1 Performance and cultural process. . . .
- 2 Performance and Ethnographic Praxis. . . .
- 3 Performance and Hermeneutics. . . .
- 4 Performance and Scholarly Representation. . . .
- 5 The Politics of Performance. . . .⁴

Conquergood's questions indicate how closely related the NWU approach now is to NYU's. A further demonstration of this convergence is the collaboration between the two departments on the recurring Annual Performance Studies Conference(s). The first was held at NYU in 1995, the second at NWU in 1996, the third at Georgia Tech in 1997. Of course, by now many PS graduates – from NYU and NWU – are teaching, have authored dozens of books with a PS approach, and are disseminating PS ideas. A number of performance artists and theatre directors have also been influenced by PS.

But what is performance studies, conceptually speaking? Can performance studies be described? Performance studies is "inter" – in between. It is intergeneric, interdisciplinary, intercultural – and therefore inherently unstable. Performance studies resists or rejects definition. As a discipline, PS cannot be mapped effectively because it transgresses boundaries, it goes where it is not expected to be. It is inherently "in between" and therefore cannot be pinned down or located exactly. This indecision (if that's what it is) or multidirectionality drives some people crazy. For others, it's the pungent and defining flavor of the meat.

PS assumes that we are living in a postcolonial world where cultures are colliding, interfering with each other, and energetically hybridizing. PS does not value "purity." In fact, academic disciplines are most active and important at their ever changing interfaces. In terms of PS, this means between theatre and anthropology, folklore and sociology, history and performance theory, gender studies and psychoanalysis, performativity and actual performance events, and more – new interfaces will be added as time goes on,

and older ones dropped. Accepting "inter" means opposing the establishment of any single system of knowledge, values, or subject matter. Performance studies is unfinished, open, multivocal, and self-contradictory. Thus any call for or work toward a "unified field" is, in my view, a misunderstanding of the very fluidity and playfulness fundamental to performance studies. That sidwinder again, the endlessly creative double negative at the core of restoration of behavior.

Closer to the ground is the question of the relation of performativity to performance proper. Are there any limits to performativity? Is there anything outside the purview of performance studies? To answer, we must distinguish between "as" and "is." Performances mark identities, bend and remake time, adorn and reshape the body, tell stories, and allow people to play with behavior that is "twice-behaved," not-for-the-first-time, rehearsed, cooked, prepared. Having made such a sweeping generalization, I must add that every genre of performance, even every particular instance of a genre, is concrete, specific, and different from every other. It is necessary to generalize in order to make theory. At the same time, we must not lose sight of each specific performance's particularities of experience, structure, history, and process.

Any event, action, item, or behavior may be examined "as" performance. Approaching phenomena as performance has certain advantages. One can consider things as provisional, in-process, existing and changing over time, in rehearsal, as it were. On the other hand, there are events that tradition and convention declare "are" performances. In Western culture, until recently, performances were of theatre, music, and dance – the "aesthetic genres," the performing arts. Recently, since the 1960s at least, aesthetic performances have developed that cannot be located precisely as theatre or dance or music or visual arts. Usually called either "performance art," "mixed-media," "Happenings," or "intermedia," these events blur or breach boundaries separating art from life and genres from each other. As performance art grew in range and popularity, theorists began to examine "performative behavior" – how people play gender, heightening their constructed identity, performing slightly or radically different selves in different situations. This is the performative [J. L.] Austin introduced and [Judith] Butler and queer theorists discuss.

The performative engages performance in places and situations not traditionally marked as "performing arts," from dress-up to certain kinds of writing or speaking. The acceptance of the performative as a category of theory as well as a fact of behavior has made it increasingly difficult to sustain the distinction between appearances and facts, surfaces and depths, illusions and substances. Appearances are actualities. And so is what lies beneath appearances. Reality is constructed through and through, from its many surfaces or aspects down through its multiple depths. The subjects of performance studies are both what is performance and the performative – and the myriad contact points and overlaps, tensions and loose spots, separating and connecting these two categories.

Notes

- 1 R. Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 36.
- 2 J. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

- 3 D. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 3.
- 4 D. Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," *Communications Monographs* 58 (June 1991), 190. [Dwight Conquergood was another significant figure in the implementation of Performance Studies in the academy.]

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