



The German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English
Deutsche Gesellschaft für das englischsprachige Theater und Drama der Gegenwart e. V.

28th Annual CDE Conference, Graz, Austria, 20 June–23 June 2019

The German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE) is pleased to announce its 28th Annual Conference (20 June–23 June 2019). It is organized by the Departments of British and of American Studies and by the Centre for Intermediality Studies in Graz (CIMIG) at the University of Graz (Austria) and will be held as a residential conference at the 'Bildungshaus Mariatrost' in Graz.

Theatre of Crisis: Aesthetic Responses to a Cross-Sectional Condition

Crisis as a moment of uncertainty that may evolve into a climactic turning or “event” (Badiou) has had a long career on the dramatic stage and in performance theory. At the same time, the term can designate a more mundane situation of perpetual liminality, of managing daily life while consistently teetering between a bleak or/and a hopeful outlook. The conference theme takes up this second meaning of crisis in order to discuss how such ordinary crises have provided subject matter for formal experimentation and aesthetic innovation. Recent critical theory concerned with the global ascendancy of neoliberal biopolitics has emphasized the ways in which crisis—experienced through precarity, insecurity, or austerity—has become an ongoing condition. Scholars such as David Harvey, Moishe Postone, Lauren Berlant, or Jasbir K. Puar have pointed out that this sense of common crisis has resulted in a gradual wearing out of political subjectivity. Berlant’s notion of “slow death” highlights that this process of bodily and psychological attrition disables the political agency of individuals and communities. Such diffuse forms of crisis have also been characterized as structural violence (Galtung) and/or “slow violence” (Nixon).

A sense of crisis as an ordinary condition poses new challenges to drama and theatre as art forms. If crisis is no longer a single, life-changing event but a slow unraveling, a mode of ordinary living under global capitalism, what does this entail for its representation? How can theatre aesthetics respond to processes of gradual attrition or continued insecurity? How does theatre meet the challenging scale-based tension between the temporal-spatial limitations of performances and the larger temporal-spatial extent of crisis? We invite papers that focus on aesthetic innovation in dramatic texts, their strategies of representation, and related performance practices. Presentations should critically discuss the nexus between innovative aesthetics and theme so that the conference participants can share and contemplate a broad range of aesthetic stratagems.

We invite proposals for papers in English of 20 minutes length, with possible topics including (but not being limited to):

- Generic, structural, and aesthetic strategies in performing crisis (e.g., aesthetic simulation of the components and scale of crisis); new forms of dramatic style and theatrical practice, also in comparison to other genres and media
- Adopting, adapting, and reinventing traditional genres (e.g., theatre of the absurd, dystopian drama, expressionist drama, in-her-face-theatre, epic drama, theatre of cruelty, meta-drama etc.) for the purposes of representing crisis as an enduring condition
- Crisis as reconceptualization of liminality (van Genneep, Turner, Thomassen), as confronting fear and aesthetics
- Impact of crisis on the relation between human and non-human phenomena (e.g., ‘ecodramaturgy’)
- Crisis and intersectionality (race, gender, and class), crisis and non-Western models, crisis and dis/ability

In accordance with CDE’s constitutional policy, papers should deal exclusively with contemporary (i.e. post-1989) theatre and drama in English.

Abstracts: Abstracts (300 words) for papers proposed (20 minutes maximum delivery time) should be accompanied by a short biographical note, plus full address and institutional affiliation. Since there will be no parallel sessions we can only accept a limited number of abstracts; presentations by the same person at two consecutive CDE conferences will not be possible. Submissions from emerging scholars are welcome.

Deadline: 1 December 2018

Send to: Nassim Balestrini (nassim.balestrini@uni-graz.at), Maria Löschnigg (maria.loeschnigg@uni-graz.at), and Leopold Lippert (leopold.lippert@univie.ac.at)

N.B. Only paid-up members are eligible to give papers at CDE conferences. Membership subscriptions may be taken out or renewed during the conference. For details, please contact CDE’s treasurer Monika Pietrzak-Franger (monika.pietrzak-franger@uni-hamburg.de).