

27th Annual CDE Conference, Hildesheim, Germany, May 31 to June 3, 2018

The German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE) is pleased to announce its 27th Annual Conference (31 May-3 June 2018). It is organized by the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Hildesheim (Germany) and will be held at Buehler Campus.

Fear and anxiety in contemporary drama and performance

In an increasingly news-saturated world – or even, a news-controlled one – contemporary Western social and cultural discourse is preoccupied with narratives of fear and anxiety. Especially after the events of 11 September 2001, there has been a significant increase in plays and productions representing events, contexts, people, and situations that relate to these themes. Meanwhile, we are encouraged to be afeared of: the anonymous or digital other, the unknown or unexplainable (such as disappearing planes), the collapse of capitalism (and the bankers who caused it), fake news and ‘post-truths’, and the rise of the political right (or left). The critic Sara Ahmed points to the political functions of emotions when she argues that “emotionality as a claim *about* a subject or a collective is clearly dependent on relations of power, which endow ‘others’ with meaning and value” (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Routledge 2004, p. 4). In addition, Carolyn Korsmeyer and Barry Smith contend that “[e]motions yield a type of cognition that is unavailable by any means other than emotional experience itself” and that “mental phenomena such as emotions and beliefs are ‘about’ something; they are ‘directed towards’ some object or other, whether a real object, an imaginary object, or a state of affairs.” (In: Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust*, Open Court 2004, p. 10) By asking how we define or understand fear and anxiety and how theatre and performance attend to them, we hope to help shedding light on the contemporary structure of feeling.

This conference aims at tracing the directions of emotions as well as cognitive and physical aspects of emotions in drama and theatre and invites scholars and practitioners to approach and re-assess their field from a thoroughly contemporary viewpoint. How do playwrights today represent and create affects, especially fear and anxiety? How can and does the theatre attend to the emotions raised in local and global conflicts or the (post)apocalyptic narratives of the present? Which forms does it find for critically reflecting on the politics of fear and anxiety? And does excitement of fear in the audience for ‘therapeutic’ reasons (Aristotle) still play a role in contemporary dramaturgy? We welcome proposals that investigate the role of affects, emotions, and feelings in contemporary theatre and performance in general and fear and anxiety in particular. You might wish to analyse representations of fear and anxiety on page and stage or to illustrate the significance, functions, and responsibilities of the arts in today's society.

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

- fear, anxiety, and affect in performance
- fear and anxiety in political conflicts on stage
- fear, populism, and performance
- fear, anxiety, and dystopian visions
- fear and the making and "un-making" of cultural production and expression
- interconnections between fear or anxiety and trauma
- disgust, repulsion, and fear: affecting the audience
- spatial dramaturgies of fear and anxiety
- (mediated) feelings and the "live-ness" of performance

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

Please send an abstract of 300 words together with a 100-word biography by 15th November 2017 to Stefani Brusberg (brusberg@uni-hildesheim.de).

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).