

Abstract

New Dramaturgies - Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt

Part I. New Dramaturgy

Synne Behrndt

I begin with a short reflection on the complexity involved in attempting to call something 'new'. From this discussion, the paper moves on to discuss 'New Dramaturgy' (as for example proposed by Marianne Van Kerkhoven in *Theaterschrift*, 'On Dramaturgy' no. 5/6, 1994). The proposition of such a term attempts to conceptualise the kinds of (new) dramaturgies that could be said to be organised according to non-hierarchical compositional principles. One could argue that historically there has been a tendency to reject text in the pursuit of a new dramaturgical paradigm. However, this rejection would be unhelpful because the implication of New Dramaturgy is not about text or not-text, but signals a shift in compositional logic and sense-making. Thus elements within a composition can have their own discrete and individual qualities which propose contrasting, complementary or opposing strands and narratives within a structure. Instead of doubling up information, elements can be layered and thus create a multiplicity of stories, responses and interpretations. This is already a common strategy in much contemporary performance practice, but it might be interesting to contemplate how this dramaturgical paradigm invites us to – not reject, but instead - grapple with *where* and *how* we locate meaning, stories and narrative. I then comment on Katie Mitchell's production of Martin Crimp's *Attempts on her Life* (National Theatre, March 2007). We might here see an interesting paradoxical dramaturgical reading of Crimp, which highlights the stage-managed theatricality in creating coherent stories, yet at the same it also manages to tell those stories.

(Synne Behrndt, March 2007)

Part II. Getting the 'Now' into the Written Text

Cathy Turner

In my section of our paper, I expand on ideas briefly outlined in our forthcoming book, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, where we suggest that contemporary theatre might tend towards a 'dramaturgy of process and production'.

I suggest that a number of recent works are concerned with the live process of making meaning, in particular, the ways in which narratives are constructed. This theme cuts across diverse approaches to writing, from new plays to devised theatre and performance.

I discuss three works: Roland Schimmelpfennig's *Arabische Nacht* (2001) (in David Tushingham's translation, *Arabian Night*); Julia Barclay's *No One* (2001) and Forced Entertainment's *And On The Thousandth Night...* (2000). In Schimmelpfennig's play, the characters narrate their own stories; in Barclay's work, the performers negotiate and interpret a verbal collage, coalescing into fragmented dialogue; in Forced Entertainment's performance installation, performers improvise stories through the night. Each of these works makes us aware of the moment by moment emergence of a narrative.

I suggest that this feature of contemporary work (and I cite many other examples), might suggest some starting points for the dramaturg's work with writers. These include Danish dramaturg Janicke Branth's suggestion that writers may benefit from studying oral storytelling, and the possibility of writers' symposia focused on formal and conceptual issues.

(Cathy Turner, March 2007)