

## Abstracts

**KEN CERNIGLIA AND AUBREY LYNCH II** *Embodying Animal, Racial, Theatrical and Commercial Power in The Lion King*

Disney stories and characters have delighted international audiences for nearly nine decades, but as The Walt Disney Company has sought to reach new markets in the twenty-first century, Disney's live theatrical productions have served a unique and powerful ambassadorial function in which body and representation play vital roles. In 1997, Julie Taymor's production of *The Lion King*, which is inspired by several cultural traditions, opened on Broadway to critical and popular acclaim. The musical has since been translated into six languages and has played in over a dozen productions around the world.

While the characters are animals, *The Lion King* is a human fable, and Taymor was determined that audiences see the fictional animals and real, live humans at the same time—what she termed the “double event.” With her unique vision as a guide, she enlisted an international creative team: film co-director Roger Allers and co-writer Irene Mecchi as book writers, Rhodesia-born Brit Richard Hudson as set designer, Michael Curry as puppet co-designer, Garth Fagan as choreographer, and a handful of diverse composers and lyricists to create the score—Elton John and Tim Rice, Lebo M, Hans Zimmer, Mark Mancina, and Taymor herself.

Despite consciously postmodern, internationalist, and postcolonial aims—which have earned both economic and political rewards—the creative process, product, and reception have not arrived without challenges, complications, and criticism. This paper examines how *The Lion King* attempts to harness animal, racial, theatrical, and commercial power for diverse audiences in a global age.

**ERIKA T. LIN** *Recreating the Eye of the Beholder: Dancing and Spectacular Display in Early Modern English Theatre*

Shakespeare and his contemporaries regularly staged plays that exhibited feats of physical prowess, such as dancing, acrobatics, and combat. Spectacles of this sort existed in a kind of double space: even as they operated within a play's fictional narrative, they also served as legitimate entertainments in their own right. Jean Alter refers to these complementary aspects of theatre as its “referential” and “performant” functions: theatre as semiotic

system, employing both mimetic and nonmimetic forms of representation, and theatre as spectacular show, akin to sports or the circus. My paper analyzes the interplay between these two performance modes in displays of bodily skill in the early modern English theatres. Drawing on a variety of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents concerning foreign travel, sensory perception, physical talent, and popular festivity, I explore the cultural valences of what contemporaries referred to as “feats of activity” that refreshed, or “recreated,” the eye. I pay particular attention to onstage dances. These episodes, I contend, suggest an alternative to post-Benjamin, post-Brecht notions of spectacle as that which dazzles passive viewers. Juxtaposing extratheatrical primary sources with brief snapshots from Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, I reconstruct the historically specific affective experiences generated by early modern displays of physical spectacle. Nonverbal practices, such as dance, were not merely depicted in drama but integrated into the performance medium itself. I argue that the resulting dynamics between representation and presentation situated spectators as active participants in the performance event. In this way, onstage dances reinforced communal identity and contributed to the construction and dissemination of broader cultural discourses.

**CARL PARIS** *Power (Empowerment) through the Body, Self, and Black Male Identity in Contemporary Theatrical Modern Dance*

Postmodern articulations in contemporary theatrical modern dance have produced new black male expressions—straight and gay—that disrupt rigid and reductive representations of identity and masculinity and also open up pluralistic and libratory possibilities through the black male dancing body. I use this context to examine power (and empowerment) in the work of choreographers Bill T. Jones, Ronald K. Brown, Reggie Wilson, Nicholas Leichter, Helanius Wilkins, and Kyle Abraham, who approach the particularity of black male identity from postmodern perspectives. My idea of power, here, is inspired by Ralph Ellison’s nameless black protagonist in *Invisible Man* whose search for self-understanding and identity stands as both a literal and allegorical struggle for the power over one’s “visibility” and agency as a black man. Through identifying key philosophical, stylistic, and thematic representations across the choreographers, I explore how power negotiates and is negotiated around issues of self, sexuality, and identity in the black male dancing body.

**MUNJULIKA RAHMAN** *Price of Gold and Light: Power and Politics in Hey Ananta Punya* *Hey Ananta Punya*, a dance-drama adapted and choreographed by the Bangladeshi choreographer Warda Rihab was performed in Kolkata, India, in December 2009. Rihab plays the main character Srimoti, a dancer at the court of King Ajatashatru. Srimoti embraces Buddhism but is not allowed to practice since Ajatashatru decrees Hinduism to be the state religion. In the narrative, Hinduism, the predominant religion of India, represses Buddhism, which is a minority religion in the subcontinent. Even though on the surface the dance-drama deals with Hinduism and Buddhism, the performance is complicated by the knowledge that the choreographer and most of the performers are Bangladeshi Muslims. In the context of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and India’s political and economic hegemony in South Asia, the performance can be considered as a critique of India’s policies. In considering the choreographer’s background and the dance-drama’s narrative, aesthetics, and location of performance, I analyze the various structures of power that a

Bangladeshi female choreographer operates within during her training and performance in India. *Hey Ananta Punya* is significant because it points to the complex web of issues involving politics, history, and religion that have been a part of dance in Bangladesh for the past few decades because of India's influence in the field, particularly through Indian-government scholarships for advanced dance training. In the paper, I use Michel Foucault's theory of power as systems of interrelated networks and knowledge as a system of power to show how dance as a form of embodied knowledge can function as a tool in shaping, disseminating, and expressing ideology.

**JANELLE REINELT** *Power Working through/on Bodies in the UK*

This statement started its life as part of the State of the Profession panel at the joint ASTR/CORD conference in Seattle (November 2010). I was asked to respond to the question of "how power has worked on/through/with bodies in the fields of dance and theatre studies, and in the academy at large." I decided to speak about the serious crisis facing higher education in light of the economic recession and its particular challenges to the academy and our field, using my present context in the UK, where I have lived since 2006, as a case study.

**GERARD M. SAMUEL** *Shampoo Dancing and Scars—(Dis)Embodiment in Afro-Contemporary Choreography in South Africa*

It could be argued that in no other colonised country were dancing bodies more destructively subjected to disempowerment and disembodied (Merleau-Ponty) than in Apartheid South Africa. This paper will review Mamela Nyamza, Celeste Botha, and Megan Erasmus's works to comment on choreographic choices that subvert power in South Africa. What is imposed in a transformation and libertory environment and by whom? The politics of movement discussion by Sylvia Glasser's (1991) "Is Dance a Political Movement?" will be extended, and Sherry Shapiro's (2009) writings appropriated to illustrate how hair sustains a normative position for the multiple users and recipients of contemporary dance. Can the scars of Apartheid be healed through Afro-contemporary dance choreography over time?

**BEN SPATZ** *Practice as Research: Foundations for a Community of Knowledge*

This paper seeks to theorize embodied knowledge. If knowledge is power, then questions of "embodied knowledge" should be central to this conference. How and when is knowledge embodied? Under what conditions can embodied practice constitute knowledge? And what kind of practice-based "research" expands this kind of knowledge? Today, as references to embodied knowledge continue to multiply, it is essential that scholars arrive at a useful and rigorously theorized understanding of this concept that can satisfy both the demands of practice and the requirements of scholarship. This presentation intervenes in the ongoing debate on practice as research, with reference to the conversations of the ASTR working group on Performance as Research (of which I am part) and to two recent books published by Palgrave-Macmillan.

**E. J. WESTLAKE** *El Güegüence post-Sandinista Nicaragua, and the Resistant Politics of Dancing*

Folk dance fulfills a particular function in the survival of communal memory. Community history and identity live through the animated body. But in the case of *El Güegüence*,

Nicaragua's hybrid Spanish-Nahuatl dance-drama, many feel it is a contested tradition with a contested set of significations. Within that contestation, communal memory is fractured and ruptured in ways that produce a unique and dynamic discourse.

In this paper, I will focus on Irene López's reworking of *El Güegüence* as the dance piece *El Gran picaro*. López has been criticized for altering the "authentic" dance tradition, a criticism she answers by pointing out that the original dance was lost when only the artifact of the dramatic text was preserved. López's reworking functions as collective memory and as an act of *restored* tradition, an invention meant to stand in for the original as faithfully as the inventor can imagine.

I will also examine the redeployment of *El Güegüence* by groups who have embraced the figure and the act of dancing the masked drama as an expression of the subaltern, the marginalized, and the closeted minority identities within the context of the national culture, specifically Grupo Relajo, with its playful workshops built around the popular story. Ultimately, *El Güegüence* represents an artifact of the erasure of dance and, by extension, the indigenous body. Both López and Grupo Relajo, through their staging, resurrect the body of the indigenous Other and create a vehicle for the body to move in resistance to such erasure.

**PRAISE ZENENGA** *Power and the Body: Revisiting Dance and Theatre Aesthetic of Resistance in the Academy*

The Congress on Research in Dance (CORD's) thematic and structural concerns over the years, which seek to bring together dance and its allied fields of the performing arts (theatre, music, cinema, etc.), parallel the African aesthetic experience that emphasizes the interconnectedness and inseparability of theatre, dance, and music in performance. Theorizing on the self and the social, to examine the state of the profession, this paper offers an autoethnographic account not only of the contradictory ways in which personal and professional subjectivity is constructed but also of the performing body's power and capacity to reproduce and transform the world. The paper argues that, historically, the performing body of color constitutes a continuum of creative possibilities whose capacity to resist state and institutional hegemonic power has always manifested itself covertly or overtly. In conclusion, the paper celebrates a long history of the performing body of color's ability to double-speak. The performing body's ability to create ambivalent discourses that can be outwardly entertaining while secretly radical and deeply revolutionary has throughout history empowered the body of color to resist even the most repressive circumstances.