

# bodies on stage \_

21st Annual Conference of the  
German Society for Contemporary  
Theatre and Drama in English (CDE)



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june 2012

## call for papers

Bodies on stage are one of the central elements of theatre and – implicitly – also of drama. Characters on the page attain the status of corpo-reality. At the same time, a living person becomes part of the “as-if” world of the play, signifying class, ethnicity, gender, age. Bodies and their movements in space, voice, facial and gestural expression produce additional meanings which often go beyond the written text. Thus, each performance of a play is unique. Physically demanding theatrical moments – from tap dancing to Kung Fu fighting – especially highlight the precarious liveness of the moment and the virtuosity of the actor.

Theatre and drama in the last thirty years have explored the duality of the body on stage and its potentials in several ways. Cross-gender and cross-ethnic castings (either stipulated in the drama or implemented in a specific production) highlight the constructedness of identities and their political as well as parodic dimensions. Characters can be represented by puppets, projections or even machines. These alienation techniques (in the widest Brechtian sense) point out the

gap between actor and character. Other plays do just the opposite: especially In-Yer-Face dramas use bodies as part of emotionally charged, often brutally explicit representations of violence and/or sexuality. Similar effects are created by collapsing the distance between character, author and actor in performance pieces or one-author shows which blur the boundaries between fact and fiction.

What at first sight might look like a going back to basics, cherishing the magic of live theatre and thinking about the bodies involved behind or beyond discursive constructions, can be connected to two trends in recent research. Firstly, studies by – amongst others – Susan Bordo, Michel Foucault or Judith Butler focus on corporeality as a site of negotiation between nature and culture, materiality, discourses and power. Their theories on “bodies that matter” (to borrow one of Butler’s titles) lead to revised discourses on gender, power and politics. Secondly, the performative turn in theatre studies interrogates the materiality of bodies and their effect on the autopoietic processes and the production of liveness.

The 2012 CDE conference aims at exploring the broad variety of recent drama in English concerning corporeality – from the importance of actors or ensembles for the production and reception of plays to the discursive experiments written on and around bodies. We invite **papers in English of 20 minutes** length. Possible **topics** include (but are not limited to):

- writing for bodies: actors and their connection with playwrights
- different strategies of representing corporeality on stage
- explorations of gender, ethnicity, class and age by cross-casting
- typecasting, celebrity casting or casting against the grain
- suffering bodies, violence and nudity and their functions
- old media of the body versus new media
- grotesque bodies

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

Please send your abstracts (of **300 words**), a short biographical note plus full address and institutional affiliation no later than **31 December 2011** to:

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