

CFP: Theatre and the Popular

Conference in Reykjavik, University of Iceland, 11-13 March 2016

Association of Nordic Theatre Scholars in cooperation with the Institute of Research in Literature and Visual Arts, University of Iceland

Deadline: 15 November 2015

“Popular culture is a contradiction in terms. If it’s popular, it’s not culture. If everyone loves it, it’s not original.” (Vivienne Westwood)

The notion of the popular is a complex issue in the study of culture. Popular forms of culture have been shunned by renowned scholars and critics from Theodor Adorno in his critique of the culture industry to Clement Greenberg on avant-garde and kitsch. The popular is often seen as unoriginal, vulgar, mechanical, inauthentic or at worst: populist.

Popular theatre forms have seldom enjoyed much attention in scholarly research unless legitimized through politics, avant-garde, innovation or appropriation in legitimate art forms. Peter Brook’s acrobatics in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Mnouchkine’s circus and commedia dell’arte acts, Dario Fo’s politicized farce celebrate popular forms by appropriating them into other fields.

The ambivalent status of the popular in theatre studies raises critical questions. In its strictest sense, popular theatre denotes the theatre of/for the people, but who are ‘the people’? What defines theatre, which addresses the audience as public, as popular? To some extent, the notion of the popular serves as a category of distinction by referring to ‘lower’ forms of culture, catering for ‘the people’. Its manifold indications of distinction, e.g. in taste, class or education, makes one thing clear: the popular is political.

We welcome diverse papers on the theme of theatre and the popular, theoretical approaches, case studies, historical inquiries etc. Topics may include:

- Theatre high and low
- Popular theatre in the public sphere
- Political theatre – The popular and the populist
- Theatre and the cultural industry
- Avant-garde and the popular – The popular in the Avant-garde
- The popular, the people and the public
- History and the popular – Popularizing history
- Popular theatre and class
- Gender and the popular – The popular gender
- Commodities and materiality of theatre
- Entertainment in the theatre

Practical information

We invite scholars of theatre and performance studies who are interested in participating in the conference to please send a 200-300 word abstract and a short CV to the Program Committee by 15 November 2015 to Magnus Thor Thorbergsson at theatrepopular.reykjavik@gmail.com. Decisions will be made by 1 December 2015. Selected papers will be published in a special issue of Nordic Theatre Studies in 2017.

The conference is organized by the Association of Nordic Theatre Scholars in collaboration with the Institute of Research in Literature and Visual Arts at the University of Iceland.

More information on the conference can be found on: theatreandthepopular.wordpress.com

Conference Committee:

Magnus Thor Thorbergsson, University of Iceland

Laura Gröndahl, University of Tampere

Daria Kubiak, Stockholm University

Erik Matsson, Stockholm University

Teemu Paavolainen, University of Tampere

Zane Radzobe, University of Latvia

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