

REINVENTING MULTICULTURAL POLITICAL STREET THEATRE - Sociotheatrical experiments in Vienna/Austria

Lecture-Demonstration on the work of PROJEKT THEATER/BRTCHERIE, Vienna/Austria with Videoscreening of works performed at the "BUTCHERIE" and in the public space (2004-2010) (www.experimentaltheater.com)

Richard Schechner wrote in *The future of ritual*: "The best way to ... understand, enliven, investigate, get in touch with, outwit, contend with, defend oneself against, love... others, other cultures... is to perform and to study performances and performative behaviours in all their various genres... And what is performance: behaviour heightened, if ever so slightly, and publicly displayed, twice-behaved behavior." (Introduction, Routledge 1993, p. 1)

As former student and Schechner Ph.D. graduate (1994), I will underscore the influence of his eminent theoretical and practical works – in particular "Environmental Theater" and studies on ritual processes - on our recent sociotheatrical works since 2004.

In the spring of 1998 PROJEKT THEATER-Vienna-New York (founded in 1991) opened its first STUDIO in the bohemian 7th district : a white cube open-space for "Poor Theater" and avant-garde performance works. From 1998-2003 the company established a body of work based on Beckett's "Endgame" and contemporary women's works, acquiring esteem as classical avantgardist "free" theater.

As a result of the "Vienna Theatre Reform" (2003), the company moved into new headquarters at the BUTCHERIE, redefined its theatrical mission by expanding into the public space, acquired a new audience and began its cooperation with migrants, refugees and small businesses. Under the title "socio-theatre" a new political performance art has evolved.

This "experiment in progress" will be discussed in relation to Richard Schechner's important impulses as new forms of "political intercultural performances" in open storefront-spaces, local businesses, city places and the streets. Collaborating with migrants, refugees, small businesses, women or unemployed, "sociotheatrical" formats encompass theatrical cooking-shows and wedding-parties, theatrical processions in public spaces and large fiestas with artists and migrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Topics and literary texts include focus on questions of globalization, migration, integration, and the rise of the Right. New networks and interfaces are forged between artists, non-professionals and local NGOs, human rights and refugee groups, community radio and television.

About the Author

Eva Brenner (Ph.D., MA, mag.art/Academy of Fine Arts/Vienna-Austria), born 1953 in Vienna, is a theatre director, producer, author and filmmaker. She studied theater and

philosophy at the University of Vienna, set and costume design at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, and from 1980 to 1993 lived and worked in New York City working off- and off-off-Broadway as a director and set designer (Public Theatre, Theatre for the New City, The Labor Theater, Castillo Theatre). She received an M.A. and Ph.D. cum laude at New York University under Prof. Richard Schechner (HAMLETMACHINE onstage...) and in 1994 returned to her native Austria where she founded her own experimental theater. She has directed plays such contemporary writers as E. Jelinek, M. Duras, I. Bachmann, M. Streeruwitz, H. Krall, E. Lasker-Schüler, S. Beckett or H. Müller (for Wiener Festwochen, dietheater Künstlerhaus, klagenfurter ensemble, Stadttheater Klagenfurt and her own company. In 1998 she opened PROJEKT THEATER STUDIO as experimental laboratory for interdisciplinary performance work, and in 2004 an intercultural theater center with community-outreach, the FLEISCHEREI (BUTCHERIE). It is located in an old storefront space with basement theater and brings together multicultural artists from Austria and abroad to create new working-formats — so-called “socio-theatrical” experiments performed in its own space, the streets, shops or restaurants. Using literary and original texts addressing political themes and integrate community-audiences as well as anti-globalization activist. Recent theater collaborations with Castillo Theatre (New York) and Arab-Hebrew Theatre of Jaffa (Israel), lectures, workshops and lecture-demonstrations in Spain, Israel, Poland, USA.