

How the West was Won: RS in the Wild West (of Wales) and how his Performance Theories were Adopted, Mutated and Betrayed by the Natives.

This irreverent, mischievous yet provocative paper will trace the influence of RS (from Environmental Theatre, through Performance Theory to Performance Studies) on a group of theatre makers on the edge of Europe across the last 40 years. Utilising Schechner's (adopted) notion of schismogenesis it will track the fragmentation of Welsh theatre companies Cardiff Laboratory Theatre (1973- 87) and Brith Gof (1981- 92) and the numerous shards, fractures, initiatives and performance practices that have emerged.

Specifically it will account for, illuminate and interrogate, a series of international conferences organised by the Centre for Performance Research (1984 -) between 1987 and 1997 entitled Points of Contact, which included - Points of Contact: Performance, Politics and Ideology ('92); Points of Contact: Performance Food and Cookery ('94); Points of Contact: Performance, Tourism and Identity ('96). These conferences/festivals became ever more ambitious in scope and scale exploring a dramaturgy in conception and advancing new models and disciplinary collaborations for performance studies. Eight editions were curated on widely different themes and constellations and Schechner has acknowledged that they 'helped to define performance studies'.

Furthermore, a distinctive 'school' of performance studies has been forged in Wales, founded on aesthetic practice, artist led research and practice as research; inspired by the early writings of Schechner a small group of theatre practitioners extended their thinking and practice and wove new threads into the PS web. From such a peripheral position (geographical and ideological) the dominant North American versions of PS were contested and new 'mutant' forms have emerged. This presentation will speculate upon legacy and heresy; adaption, mutation and betrayal.

About the Author

Richard Gough