

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 16, 2014 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

SESSION 1K

MEANING AND MOTION IN ICONIC WORKS OF THEATRE AND DANCE

Session Moderator: Juliet McMains, Dance
258 MGH

12:30 PM to 2:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

The Apartheid and the Holocaust: Political Theatre in Action

Ashley Almon, Junior, Art History

Mentor: Stefka Mihaylova, School of Drama

Athol Fugard's play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* explores significant racial influences in culture. Fugard writes about the apartheid that controlled South Africa beginning in 1948. The play debuted in 1972 in Cape Town, South Africa. Two years later, it premiered in London, winning "The London Theatre Critics Award" for "Best Play of 1974". This was quite a win for a piece of work that stemmed from improvisation. Although the narrative topic is that of a "black" issue, the majority of the audience that witnessed the work was white. Now, it is even more fathomable that most of the audience members were middle to upper class white majority. This might have changed the projective interpretive communities that the author and director originally had in mind. In this paper, I propose examining evidence, such as reviews and historical content regarding *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* to help fully understand which interpretive communities were involved. I will be taking a phenomenological approach: analyzing the audience's interpretation of the play, and answering the question "How are we creating social change?" I also intend on researching other works by the author, to prove that *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* was not his only attempt at bringing clarity to the terrible events that occurred under the apartheid. By discovering which groups were involved, it will help us gain a deeper understanding for the play, and allow us to gauge the audience's take on the performance. Did audience members really exit the theatre with a deeper knowledge and sympathy for what happened under the apartheid? Did knowledge of the apartheid change how we see the world? How can we relate the apartheid to other elements of our history, such as the horrific tragedy known as the Holocaust? And finally, can art help our society sympathize and avoid future "apartheids"?

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You Forgot the Women Sizwe

Kayla Dreysse, Senior, Drama

Mentor: Stefka Mihaylova, School of Drama

Athol Fugard is regarded as one of the most prominent playwrights of South Africa; in a time of racial tensions and political dismay he brought to the stage the turmoil facing the peoples of South Africa. His play, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, is a stark play addressing the real life issues of race and tensions between the Western and African ideology, and basic survival in an the apartheid world. What his play fails to address is any significant way is the plight of women struggling with similar issues. Within the play only four women are ever mentioned, Styles homemaker wife, only mentioned in passing reference, Banzi's wife a lonely helpless homemaker, Buntu's radical wife and a friendly woman peddling oranges to the drunken men. None of these women are given any depth of humanity in the play and are merely used as objects to reinforce or detract from the masculinity of the men involved. I assert that in a world were being a "man" is determined by having a wife and children as Styles father claims, there must be a societal predisposition to the value of women. However, if we follow the plays view of women they seem almost disposable or at least interchangeable. But the women of South Africa at the time were not all passive flowers in the apartheid world. During this time period the Federation of South African Women was created and was politically active in attempting to stop the many changes in apartheid. In my essay I examine the stereotypes of women mentioned in the play, compare those to the realities of women in South Africa at the time and consider the negative repercussions of a play in which women are on the sideline. In the grand scheme of history what is the cost when we forget to include the women?