Organizations as Theatre and Organizational Theatre – From Metaphor to Intervention

A symposium submitted to **the Research Methods, Organizational Development & Change** *,* *and* **Organization & Management Theory** *Divisions of the Academy of Management*

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Abstract

This symposium will integrate new perspectives on theatre & organization into a clarifying picture. It will help the audience to develop a notion of the many connections between the language, the material tools and the aesthetics of theatre and the organizational world. It will achieve this by offering a range of approaches, reaching from theatre as metaphor to theatre as intervention. The symposium will help developing a notion of how theatre theory and practice are used, or can be used in organizational research. We will begin by considering organizations as actors on a global stage, applying theatrical analysis to corporate actions. Then, we zoom in and look at organizational members on the stage of service encounters. We complete the investigation by looking at theatre as a new intervention tool for change management. This means the process and aim of hiring theatre groups that specialized on working for change management initiatives.

Explanation of interest to each division

Research Methods Division

Theorist and practitioners of theatre have always seen their art as a way of investigating social life. Some were descriptive (like the Realists); some had an idea of bringing change to society (like Brecht). This symposium opens a venue for using theories and techniques of theatre to investigate organizational life. This is done both in respect to theatre as a metaphor for global and local organizational life, and in respect to theatre as a practice in change management initiatives. The papers are central to the concerns of the Research Methods Division, because they focus on new theory development, and they propose new approaches for doing research on organizations. The symposium shows how theatre language and tools are used in connection to the organizational world. In this, the papers demonstrate a variety of approaches to organizational phenomena, thus drawing an agenda for future research on theatre & organizations.

Organization Development & Change

Theatre theory and practice has often been linked to change. In fact, the language of theatre is filled with terms of change. Used as a metaphor, theatre signifies how real-life actors (humans as well as organizations) live and adopt themselves to changing environments and how they change their environment by their actions. Used as intervention, theatre with its tools is used to encourage change in organizations. Here, plays, written for specific organizational problems, are staged in front of organizational audiences with the aim to change employees' work behaviors. Linking the change views of theatre as metaphor and theatre as intervention this symposium presents a useful theoretical foundation for future research in organization development & change. These papers, then, are central to the concerns of the ODC division, focused as they are on change on the inter-organizational and intra-organizational level.

Organization & Management Theory Division

This symposium explores multiple levels of framing and exploring the notion of theatre in organization and management. The levels reach from organizations as theatre to organizational theatre. On the metaphor level, the papers explore the theatre notion in respect to organizations as global players and in respect to organizational members as bound into a social system that requires acting behavior from them. On the intervention level, it is theatre, staged in front of organizational members that aims at changing formal and informal structures in organizations. It is management that orders the theatre intervention to raise awareness and to change organizational structures and thinking. These papers are central to the concerns of organization and management theory, because they build a solid theoretical foundation for further investigations in the theatre and organizations area. They describe and explain a fruitful relation between theatre science and organization science, and thus, give inspiration for future organizational research.

Symposium Format

We request that the symposium be provided with 1 hour 40 minutes. This time will be divided in the following way: (a) 10 minutes for an overview of the symposium and introduction of the panel members; (b) 12 minutes per presentation (five presentations for a total of 60 minutes); and, (c) 30 minutes for audience discussion and participation.
The emphasis will be on interactive questioning and participatory discussion among presenters and with the audience. Georg Schreyögg will illustrate his presentation with VCR recordings of organizational theatre interventions.

Organizations as Theatre and Organizational Theatre – From Metaphor to Intervention

Overview Statement

Theater is a well-known metaphor used in organizational and management science to describe and explain organizational actions and life. Recent developments in organizational and management science call for a reevaluation of the theater metaphor. Not only has organizational research that uses the theatre metaphor crossed the old boundaries of the notion (Linstead & Höpfl, 1999), also, new research on the use of theatrics in organization and management led to a more expanded use of theatre theory and its tools of analysis and intervention (Schreyögg & Dabitz, 1999; Leplâtre 1996).

This symposium will lead the audience through different fields of theatre & organization, creating knowledge and understanding of how the millennia old art and theory of theatre can be used fruitfully for cutting-edge organization and management science. It will integrate different views on theatre & organization into a clarifying picture. This way, it will help the audience to develop a notion of the many connections between the language, the material tools and the aesthetics of theatre and the organizational world. The symposium will achieve this by offering a range of approaches, reaching from theatre as metaphor to theatre as intervention.

The reappraisal of the connection between theatre theory & practice, and organizational science has to begin on the level of interacting organizations, investigating how corporate actors play their role on the global stage. This research gives the theatre metaphor an intriguing new application and opens a new venue for analyzing international business. On the interpersonal level, theatre has been repeatedly used as metaphor for organizational life. Crossing the boundaries, it can also function as analytic tool for organizational life. Such a new twist lies in applying the theatre metaphor to the interaction of organizational members with customers and the media. Finally, there exists also practice and research that leaves the metaphor area entirely and looks at the theatre events in organizations. This means for example, theatre plays on Christmas parties or the theatrical product presentations on trade fairs. For organizational science events like these become interesting, when management makes use of theatre for internal change management initiatives. A growing practice is to hire theatre groups and to stage especially designed plays in front of organizational audiences with the aim to change workplace behaviors.

Three strong links bind these papers together. **First**, there is an overarching concern with change. Change in the relations of corporate actors on the global stage, change in the enactment of organizational members in their work roles, change in the adaptation of theatre organizations to new environments, and finally change as the aim of theatre interventions in change management. The different perspectives on change allow for a diverse picture of how theatre and theatrics foster, encourage and stimulate change in and among organizations. They illustrate how theatre theory can be essentially linked to notions of organizational change. **Second**, all papers use the language of theatre to describe, analyze, and explain organizational phenomena. Actors, stages, roles, drama etc are common language in all papers. While each paper brings forward different approaches and traditions of theater, they keep to a common language, which allows for the audience to draw comparisons between the presentations and integrate them in a unified picture. **Third**, there is a concern with defining the domain of study. Organizations are in the focus. Because the papers deal with different levels of analysis of organizations and management, the authors are careful to define the setting, the type of theatre, and the theoretical background. This rigor helps to generate interesting theory and unifies the picture, given by the different presentations.

A brief summary of each paper's approach follows, highlighting their contribution to the theme of the conference and their relevance to the phenomenon of everyday emotion.

Boje explores the relationship between global theatrics and capitalism. He takes a meta-perspective looking at organizations on the global stage. He compares their action with the Tamara play of postmodern theatrics (Boje, 1995). In Tamara a wandering audience chases a dozen actors on a dozen stages, never able to see all actions at once. Moreover, Tamara helps explaining the absence of some players from the scene. Boje sees production and consumption as separated, with consumption as visible and production as invisible, thus absent from the stage. The divided global stage hosts a range of organizations, which act without ever knowing the whole picture. This way, Tamara can be used as metaphor for understanding the diverse activities of organizations on a global stage, opening an explaining view on (post-) modern organization behavior.

Höpfl investigates the theatricality of daily organizational life. She notices that change has become a significant feature of organizational life in the recent past. Organizational members are able to enact the change because of their theatrical skills. They perform their work role and adapt it to changing requirements. As such training for the job is nothing else but rehearsals for the role. Nowhere is this more obvious than in service jobs. In general, the corporate actor is constraint by context, role and script with a limited capacity for dramatic improvisation. This way, theatrical analysis helps understanding the performance of corporate actors.

Guillet de Monthoux discusses the surplus value of theatrical management of organizations. In his view theatrical organizations of the so-called experience economy are producing art objects for an audience. Therefore, Guillet de Monthoux calls these organizations "Art Firms". The question is then: What is the surplus value of these art objects? Using aesthetic investigations of theatrical art, he unveils the products of theatrical organizations as immanent objects. His findings open a venue for explaining why organizations chose to use theatrical manners of production.

Schreyögg changes the focus from theatre as metaphor to theatre as intervention. He investigates theatre as it is used in change management. He is careful to describe this theatre intervention in its different forms and describes the process of how such a play is set on stage. To integrate the picture into change theory Schreyögg describes the instant effects of theatre on the organizational audience. He argues with systems theory that second order observation (observation of an observation) helps the organizational members to learn about themselves in watching the plays. The semi-reality of the theatre stage allows to tackle organizational problems, which otherwise remain latent.

Meisiek, in line with Schreyögg, focuses on the use of theatre in change management. His concerns are the post-event dynamics of theatre interventions. After experiencing organizational theatre, employees engage in social sharing of their feelings about the play, i.e. they talk about their experience. They do this to make sense of their experience and organize what they have seen in connection to their previous knowledge. For the case of a business organizations Meisiek investigates, which parts of a play stayed in employees' mind, how the theatrical is integrated into everyday life. It is interesting how often, with whom and how organizational members that have experienced organizational theatre have talked about the play with others. Through the sharing process certain parts of the play become commonly remembered, i.e. an emotional knowledge of what was important is created among the employees.

Overall, these papers reflect the vibrancy of a research program that has developed a solid theoretical foundation on which to build useful and interesting studies. This symposium reflects the degree to which theatre theory and techniques are important to organizational science. The symposium will prompt its listeners to delve more deeply into the complexity of the theatre & organization relationship, understanding the field, and thus gaining stimulating insights for own future research.

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Global Theatrics and Capitalism

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Global Theatrics and Capitalism

Abstract

This paper discusses the postmodern play of Tamara as a metaphor for behavior of organizations on the global stage. Using Tamara, it is possible to describe and explain why neither corporate actors nor members of the audience ever have a full picture of the global stage, and why some actors are even missing on it. The theatre metaphor helps to understand the dynamics that guide interaction between organizations on a global arena.

Global Theatrics and Capitalism

Tamara and Global Theatrics

The purpose of this essay is to illustrate how the global stage of late capitalism is implicated in the Theatrics of the Tamara play. Tamara is experimental postmodern theater (Simard, 1984; Geis, 1993), a play in which wandering audiences divide and chase a dozen actors on a dozen simultaneous stages never able to see all the action at once (Boje, 1995). The Global Theater is a 'Tamara-land' of many stages, wandering audiences chasing characters from stage to stage, to trace the web of storylines. And off-stage there are characters that never seem to make it into the carefully scripted storylines, the animals in the slaughterhouse and the women and children in the apparel sweatshops. There is violence that interpenetrates postindustrial production that somehow is absent from the Global Theater of postmodern designer-lifestyle culture. And Tamara is a way to explain how this absence is sustained.

- ✓ Tamara of many simultaneous stages
- ✓ Wandering audiences chase the storyline from stage to stage
- ✓ Consumption and production are separated
- ✓ The experience of consumption is detached from conditions of labor
- ✓ Working conditions becomes an invisible part of the context
- ✓ Spectacle images become the fabric for self-images
- ✓ When there is immersion into the consumption experience, the spectator becomes a self-reflective actor, no longer standing aloof and observing "reality out there"
- ✓ To participate in the spectacle is to become aware of where products come from and who makes them under what conditions, and to make more festive choices
- ✓ Global Theater disperses spectators to different stages with different themes of localized immersion.
- ✓ The spectator is never able to grasp the networking of all the stages and all the characters on and off the stage.

Postmodern theater is a Tamara of many stories and storylines, on many stages with a fragmenting audience participating on the stage of production and consumption in an examination of the spectacle illusions and mystifications of Global Theater. It is an inquiry into the fragmented network of fragmented performances that result in most people never

seeing all the stages or all the characters, or the interconnections among the stages. And it is an inquiry into the spectacle sustained by the 'absent referent.'

Absent Referent

Behind every spectacle is an absence: the material reality of production whose place we see the theatric performance. The "absent referent" described by Adams (2000) is that which separates the spectator or consumer from production or worker by substituting a simulated referent. For example in the meat industry "the function of the absent referent is to keep our 'meat' separated from any idea that she or he was once an animal, keep the 'moo' or 'cluck' or 'baa' away from the meat, to keep some *thing* from being seen as having been some *one*" (Adams, 2000: 14). And it is not just the meat industry.

In the theatrics of advertising garments, Nike, Gap, and Wal-Mart do not display the suffering lives of women working in sweatshops to sell their goods. These women, the producers of the apparel, are the absent referents, while on the global stage, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and Kathee Lee Gifford, or some Barbie-model delivers a substitute performance.

Once the production of goods and services is disconnected from the existence of people who are 'sweated' and animals who are 'killed' various free-floating images become the referent and substitute. Who could stare into the faces of women and children making garments or foxes about to become coats, or the lamb on its way to the dinner table -- and not identify with what they are about to consume? The referent must have a suitable substitute, so the play can go on. In Global Theatrics, the absent referent and the substitute referent are ubiquitous, a necessary condition for the illusion to continue. In the language substitutes for reality, sweat-work becomes wage-work, and animal slaughter becomes gourmet-cuisine. The spectacle presents plays with many reversals. The worker is presented as the obstacle, the

animal is presented as the source of life, the savage is presented as the cannibal, the white man is presented as the enlightened, and the feminine is presented as the weaker.

The spectacle illusion depends upon fragmenting the relation between consumer and producer. In Tamara, we as spectators to the global economy, do not follow our consumption habits, from the stage of the mall displays, backstage to the warehouse, along the truck routes to the manufacturer, to China, where most manufacturers are settling, to the shop floor where forced overtime and poverty wages and even a beating are part of the daily reality of production. Spectators are not able to confirm with their own eyes, hearing, touch, and smell the oppression of animals or women, and instead their attention is drawn to the thousands of daily advertisements that say the exploitation is not real. And it is an attention sustained in the Business College.

By now you know I am an activist opposed to sweatshops, global racism, corporate colonization, meat-eating, the animal slaughter and human terror that sustains late global capitalism. My theory and my practice are connected: I am a vegetarian and I refuse wear clothing that comes from factory houses of terror. Through spectacle, the majority of the world who are primarily vegetarian or who live on poverty wages making the products (over) consumed by the First World remain hidden backstage, the conspicuously absent referents to global capitalism. On stage the spectacle presents the path to health and wealth as total and self-determined, and the belief that meat equals health and sweatshop is a necessary condition of economic development. This script is an addiction, entrenched in the attitudes of the spectators to Global Theater. The consumer is in denial, but so is the Business College.

Postmodern Theater and the Global Performance

Postmodern Theater is about restoring a poly-historical, multi-perspective, and ideological critique of coherence (Currie, 1998; Geis, 1993; Simard, 1984). In postmodern

Organization Theater, the spectator becomes the center of spectacle, instead of a detached, passive and distant spectator, estranged from the theater of cruelty of late capitalism. The spectator is now the 'spec-actor' (in Augusto Boal's terms) deciphering acts of consumption, tracing foods and apparel through the house of spectacle mirrors to the hidden systems of their production. Nike, for example, says it keeps the location of some 700 factories a secret to protect its competitive advantage. Yet, many activists contend that the factories are hidden for other reasons (Boje et al., 2000). Blurring the line between audience and actor places spectator more directly into a self-reflective gaze at production and consumption to observe the violence to self and others. Hiding the factories prevents spectators from making emancipatory choices.

The sexual and racial politics of manufacturing, the movement of resources from the women of Third World to the closets of the First World, is an Off-Off Broadway production (Saner, 1999). It is Off-Broadway, Street Theater, that bound the diverse activist groups in combined protest against the WTO. The problem I would like to pose is as follows: there are fewer Global Theaters performing the kinds of theatrics that include the absent referents, that place the backstage performers center stage, so the spectators can see their reality and then pronounce the spectacle performances to be fallacious and mythic. In the nation by nation and race by race segregation of work tasks, spectators and workers, animals and consumers do not meet face to face.

Postmodern Organization Theater transforms the act, agency, scene, agency, and purpose of organization-as-theater into festive improvisations that disrupt the coherent theatrics of modern organizations. The slow food movement, a reaction to McDonaldization of fast food, is known an Italy as the Convivia movement. Convivia celebrates the festival of life. To remove McDonalds from the center stage is to threaten the structure of capitalism and patriarchal culture. The meat and apparel industry is threatened by bringing production onto

the center stage and horrified at removing the veil from eyes of the spectator. Acts of self-reflection on the manner in which products are made, the ingredients, and the conditions of labor and ecology must remain mysteries the spectator is unable to resolve.

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Organizational Theatre and the Site of Performance

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Organizational Theatre and the Site of Performance

Abstract

This investigation sees organizational members as role players on the organizational stage. Change is possible because corporate actors feel the necessity to adapt their work roles to changing environmental conditions. Personnel training is thus a rehearsal for the daily performance. The theatrics metaphor allows analyzing organizational behavior and opens for a different understanding of everyday organizational life.

Organizational Theatre and the Site of Performance

The theatrical analogy in descriptions of organisational life has enjoyed a prominent position over many years and continues to offer insights into behaviour in a wide variety of roles and contexts. In this presentation, the use of the dramaturgical accounts of organisational behaviour is subjected to specific scrutiny. Three aspects of actor behaviour are considered: the counterfeit, that is, the imitation of behaviour; the conceit, that is, the imaginative conception of the role; and the corpse, that is, the failure of the role. The presentation also considers the psychological costs of performance. By focusing on these aspects of performance it is possible to give attention to the construction of the theatrical persona and the consequences of its collapse: the failure of the mask in an organisational context. This provides some useful insights into the nature of the organisational role, its cultivation and its fragility.

In the last two decades, *change* has been a significant feature of organisational life, the ways in which organisations have attempted to transform themselves - the metaphors of *change* which have been employed, the explicit use of declared corporate values, the attempts to increase commitment and identification, the exhortations to improved performance, the pursuit of behavioural regularity and a common orthodoxy - have all presented opportunities for an examination of *change* management through the dramaturgical lens. In particular, awareness of the audience, the desire to *change* consumer (and competitor) perceptions, and the acquisition of a "service ethic" has led to a conscious performance orientation and a belief in the importance of well rehearsed actors, appropriate staging and setting, in effect, the production of a compelling illusion; the promise of the spectacle of hierophantic transformation. Hence, it is instructive to examine the staging and presentation of *change* interventions.

The theatricality of organisations is rooted in the creation and re-creation of appearances which suppress difference, mask ambivalence and sustain a world of "make believe". The passion for organisational transformation in recent years has been profoundly theatrical in its outward manifestations; has been both rhetorical and fundamentally theological. Training for customer service, both in service organisations and for customer contact staff in a wide range of organisations, has given emphasis to a rhetorical style of acting and exhortation. However, this model of acting has been largely the province of corporate orators - consultant, guru or entrepreneur - whose shamanistic performances are intended to secure a passion for transformation, a consensus about the intention of the performance, a sense of being a "company" (Latin com *with* and panis *bread*) member, a cognoscente sense of worth, an improvement in performance skills.

The corporate actor is prepared for contact with the public through a series of rehearsals in which improvisation, characterisation and role-play are used to perfect the actor's craft. Organisational socialisation, inter-personal skills and job-specific training follow a similar pattern. Customer contact staff in most organisations receive training to some degree, in presentation, standardised dialogue, a level of improvisation. Unfortunately, there are almost inevitable consequences attached to this degree of preparation. The actor's craft is one of self-transformation: acting is the consummate counterfeit of experience. It is for this reason, that the actor has, throughout history, been regarded with suspicion and unease. Indeed, actors were frequently excommunicated from the Church and their craft was regarded as degrading, deceitful, morally bankrupt and hypocritical. The word hypocrite in Greek means literally *an actor* and hypocrisy, *to play on stage*. Acting is a craft which requires the simulation of behaviour and emotion, a practised dissimulation, the "professionalization of two-facedness" (Roach, 1985: 137). Arguably then, this can be applied to the ways in which organisations require the performance of *change* to be enacted.

The assumption of a role and its performance by the actor is simultaneously both remarkable and disturbing to behold. The skill which permits performed hypocrisy, which masks the actor and achieves the concealment of the actor's true character is a considerable competence. The actor is able to translate human experience for re-presentation, to convey the range of human emotion in all its power and fragility, to transform his/her appearance through costume or physical distortion, to employ voice and gesture in the realisation of the performance. In short, to make manifest a supreme deceit: to manufacture a compelling illusion. Arguably, in a similar way, the task of the trainer is similar to that of the director, that is, to achieve the best performance in context. To prepare an employee for the assumption of an organisational role is comparable to the preparation of the actor for the assumption of the dramatic mask. The major difference is in the apparent degree of discretion on improvisation which is permitted around the role. This, of course, is the point of the illustration provided at the beginning of this paper. Often, in practice, there is less discretion than might at first be supposed. The corporate actor is constrained by context, role and script with a limited capacity for dramatistic improvisation. The construction of the role regulates the appropriate repertoire which attaches to it. A senior human resource development manager in a major UK company who was experiencing serious personal difficulties was warned that she should not allow her personal life to intrude into her work as it was *not appropriate to her role* in the company. Likewise, a commercial manager with a UK paper manufacturing company explained how his personal life had atrophied as his career had advanced saying, "In my job I'm expected *to play the hard man*". A regional manager with a large insurance company who was expected to work every weekend over a period of three months asked for one day off to celebrate his daughter's fourth birthday. The request was refused with the reminder "it's *the price you have to pay for your role* in the company". The acquisition of a role is, thus, circumscribed and involves renunciation.

What is renounced is, in effect, the *supplement* of what is appropriated in the service of the performance. Roach (1985), in his analysis of Diderot's famous treatise on the actor, "Le paradoxe sur le comedien" written in 1773, comments on how Diderot compares the actor's skill with those of the atheistical priest, the seducer, the beggar, "the whore who feels nothing for the man she is with, but lets herself go in his arms anyway as a demonstration of her professional competence" (Roach, 1985: 138). Acting, therefore, is concerned with the histrionic misappropriation of emotion in the service of performance and in the service of the process of organisational *change*. This can be related to the regulation of the organisation and its actors.

Derrida considers the regulation and ordering of the site of performance in his essay, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" (1978). Traditional theatre is regulated "by the layout of a primary logos which does not belong to the theatrical site and governs it from a distance. The stage is theological for as long as its structure, following the entirety of tradition, comports the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation, letting this latter represent him as concerns what is the content of his thought, his intentions, his ideas" (Derrida, 1978: 235). It is the regulatory function of text, temporality and tropes, of absence defining presence, and, hence of commitment as obedience and deferral, which underpins the construction of organisational performance which is examined here. Hence, organisational performance is characterised as comparable to traditional theatre in its styles of enactment and, in particular, in its methods of regulation. In this sense, it is appropriate to view organisational performance as primarily theological and to consider the regulation of order and obedience from this standpoint. Authority, then, as attaching to the initiator, the creator, the author, derives from a verbal fiat which initiates and then regulates the text. Organisational change then seem to involve a movement from disorder to a notion of order which directs performance within an acting space.

However, the pursuit of order in organisational performance is rooted in ambivalence. The embodied ambivalence of the individual actor is the point departure for deconstructing the relationship between organisational performance and the notion of commitment to a common interpretation of the frame of action. The theatre is a literal frame for action. The proscenium arch is a framing and a threshold, a portal between "worlds". In Greek theatre the skene was a hierophantic symbol or site, the threshold marked a place of paradox between the worlds of gods and human beings.

My concern is with authority and the regulation of organisational performance, with the theological character of organisational *performance qua performance* and as rhetoric. By implication, it is concerned with the various movements which promote the appearance of order, with the role of the actor, with obedience and disobedience in relation to order, with the actor as the embodiment of ambivalence, and with the regulation of the performance space. This relates directly to the ways in which change processes operate in organisations and to their implications for corporate actors.

Consequently, the presentation seeks to render the performance space problematic and to make transparent the definition of the space in relation to conceptions of change within it.

- The theoretical standpoint for the presentation is interpretative and to some extent phenomenological in its literal sense.

- The presentation will be conventional but with stories, illustrations, brief enactments, and attempts to explore the boundaries and regulatory characteristics of the performance space.

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The surplus value of theatrical management of organizations

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Abstract

This paper discusses the surplus value of theatrical management of organizations. In his view theatrical organizations of the so-called experience economy are producing art objects for an audience. Therefore, these organizations are called "Art Firms". The question is then: What is the surplus value of these art objects? Using aesthetic investigations of theatrical art, the paper unveils the products of theatrical organizations as immanent objects. The findings open a venue for explaining why organizations chose to use theatrical manners of production.

The surplus value of theatrical management of organizations

What does a theatrical organization make?

Why attempt to organize a business like a theatre? If we try to approach the question of theatrical organizations, we must ask what theatre actually produces. Performances or shows are, of course, the expected outcomes of theatres. This is also true for those organizations that take on theatrical manners of production in the so-called experience economy. But what then is the value of a performance or show?

If we take theatricality serious we must try to grasp the specific ways in which theatres produce values. To search for explanations within the domain of management and organizational studies is not enough. In this paper I present *a mode* of value production proposed in aesthetic investigations of theatrical art. The paper explores a different kind of literature in order to fetch home some insights for development studies on theatrical organizations. The literature covers the social relevance and philosophical implications of theatrical art, thus offering an alternative way for analyzing these organizations. I will call the organizations "Art Firms", because the outcome of an organization that seriously pretends to do its business in theatrical ways is art.

Making immanent objects

Those who founded modern theatre; e.g. Wagner, Antoine or Lugné-Poe were attempting to change conventional banalized showbiz into what may be called schopenhauerian Art Firms. Schopenhauer´s conviction was namely that the paramount philosophical problem of being in modernity has to find its solutions outside philosophy. The pioneers of modern theatre were assembling collages of texts and images and then attempted

to make them work as art so that their surplus value exceeded both their values as single depictions (illustrations of texts) and descriptions (information of images).

What modern theatricality produces is an aesthetic surplus value. Therefore, it can be said to bring out what is missing, what lacks or falls short of individual images and texts. The historical development of modern theatre art provides us with an idea of what the product of an Art Firm in the so-called experience economy is. It brings us closer to understand the nature of the values created by turning organizations into theatrical Art Firms.

Art history shows how theatres became the natural incubators of such new Art Firms. Immediately upon joining the Bauhaus school of design Kandinsky for instance helped set up a theatrical laboratory in which design students were able to experiment with rhetoric and symbolism of design. Much of their education consisted of making performances and parties. It was not sufficient to make smart design on paper or even manufacture products; the ideas had to be staged, as Antoine had staged texts and Lugné images to make them really work. Not surprisingly, it was a Bauhaus veteran Joseph Albers, who introduced such experimental performances in the US. When our eyes meet constructed forms of a picture; the result is a fusion of what Albers calls 'factual facts' of form and the 'actual facts' of the colors (Boehm, 1995). At Black Mountain College Albers became the mentor of Rauschenberg, Cage and Cunningham. Together with friends they got what we today call 'performance art' going in the New York art world (Goldberg, 1995). The American director Richard Schechner followed up by a theory on how performances produced units of surplus value he called 'actuals' (Schechner, 1988).

Marx talked about management as making surplus value by blending work and capital as chemical substances in the modern alchemist's retort of the industrial factory. In a performance, raw materials of image and text are tossed into the melting pot of Art Firms. Out comes an incarnation of the indissoluble union of two value making processes: symbolism

and rhetoric. History of avant-garde illustrates how Art Firms compete by balancing antagonistic recipes (Bourdieu, 1992). At this point in theatre art managers as Craig and Brecht appeared, integrating new ideas and expressions into theatre and thereby producing an aesthetic surplus value.

But what really does a performance as a piece of art incarnate? The French philosopher Gerard Genette speaks of art as 'immanent objects', meaning that an artwork never is equal to either its physical images or textual notation. For image and text, in Genette´s terms "manifestations" and "notations", are only the building blocks of art. For Nelson Goodman, on the other hand, they are the two only forms of art. To him there is only autographic original art directly manifested by the artist direct work and art that could be technologically replicated by means of some notation, which he calls allographic. Mona-Lisa is a typical autographic product while a copy of Don Quixote is an allographic piece of art. The art dealing nominalist Goodman, doesn't accept any "obscurantist" inner values, and only calls "real art" such original signed pieces or certified perfect copies one could easily trade. Gérard Genette (1994) however notes that reality is far fuzzier than Goodman indicated.

Nominalists condemn any practice that acknowledges art in a third form besides original and copy. This third form of art is situated in what Genette calls an "immanent object". For instance art in a piece of music, like Tannhäuser, is such an immanent object to be constructed out of Wagner´s original score and performances one might have experienced in different opera houses. Within architecture, the work is made up of both the architect's design and the experience of visiting his building. Ballet becomes an object by the fusion of the dance on the stage and the choreographer's notation, and a gastronome will experience a dish as the immanent work of art between the notations from e.g. richly illustrated recipe book and the direct experience of the plate of steaming food on the table-stage in front of him.

Conclusion

The process of incarnation of surplus values to produce immanent objects is what theatrical art firms are producing. In the so-called experience economy, corporations are organized like theatres to be able to produce aesthetic surplus values. This process is driven by a growing demand of aesthetic products. These values are created in the production of art objects, and there can be distinguished three parts of every art object: manifestation, notation, and immanent object. Seeing Art Firms through this lens adds significantly to our understanding of their existence and it explains why it can be advantageous for business corporations to be organized like theatres. In this way, it offers an alternative way of analyzing these organizations, which represent a growing factor in western economies.

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Organizational Theatre and Organizational Change

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Organizational Theatre and Organizational Change

Abstract

This paper explores the practice of organizational theatre as intervention tool in organizations. It describes the essential parts of the theatre plays and explains the process of development of a play. The descriptive part is overarched by a system theoretical discussion of the different effects of organizational theatre, focusing on second order observation as main mechanism.

Organizational Theatre and Organizational Change

Theatrical interventions in organizations are not as new as it might appear. Even in the ancient world there was a tradition of using theatre to express concerns, to reveal conflicts, to reflect plans and to initiate discussions on topical issues. Theatre was a natural element of the political life and public discourse in the Greek Polis; a forum for forming an opinion and for keeping the system open to changes. In a somewhat similar way, organizations in France, in Canada, in Germany and many other countries have recently started to use the medium of theatre. And this is not merely a rare occurrence; in 1997 there were, for instance, no less than 2000 theatre performances in French organizations and 200 in Germany. Many organizations (in particular corporations) are currently considering to work with organizational theatre.

What exactly is meant by organizational theatre? Why are organizations keen on making use of it? What are the desired outcomes in change processes? My presentation aims at providing an answer to these questions. The theoretical background is rooted social systems theory. The presentation will make use of overhead slides and show video film samples of theatrical performances in German firms (English version).

Organizational Theatre

Nearly all organizations occasionally encounter theatre (Petzold 1972, Rosen 1988, Schreyögg 1999): role plays in management development workshops, staff cabarets at Christmas parties, corporate amateur dramatics, theatrical presentations of new products (at fairs or department stores), spectacular events at annual meetings, etc. All these forms are very exciting and deserve serious attention, but organizational theatre in the strict sense means something different.

Organizational theatre in the French tradition (Poissonneau 1992, Leplâtre 1996, Aragou-Dournon 1999) means first of all tailor-made plays staged for a specific organization or a subgroup in an organization. Basically the conception of organizational theatre is defined by four elements (Beckerman 1990):

1. Theatrical presentation: Professional performers stage a play.
2. The play dramatizes a specific problem situation faced by the organization in question.
3. The play is directed towards a clearly defined audience, e.g. the service department, a plant, the sales people, the branch managers.
4. The client organization commissions the theatre piece and pays for the production.

Typical problem situations dramatized so far in organisational theatre plays are: conflicts between two corporate cultures after a merger, communication barriers between middle and lower management, risk averse decision making in subsidiaries, "group think", resistance to change, micropolitics etc.

A production process regularly involves the following steps:

- Contact : The client organization describes the problem; the theatre group makes an offer and negotiates the contract.
- Exploration: The playwright explores the problem in question and the organizational context in which it is embedded. Methods used for exploring the issues are: Participant observation, interviews, analysis of documents etc.
- Dramatization: Writing the play. The play is expected to reflect the outcomes of the foregoing explorations.
- Realization: The process of setting up the production, involving: casting, direction, stage design, costumes, lighting design, rehearsals, as well as the process of collaboration with the client organization.
- Performance: It mostly takes place within t he organization (e.g. in the entrance hall or in a factory)

- Follow up : Workshops, discussions on the problems in focus, reflections on alternatives etc.

The way in which the production is done depends on the style of the theatre group, the problem in question, or the approach of the playwright. The range of realization styles that are used in organizational theatre is broad: realistic, naturalistic, melodramatic, absurd, burlesque etc. as is the way of dramatizing the problem: concrete or abstract, comedy or drama. Whatever the form, in all cases, organizational theatre aims at getting the audience deeply involved and confronting it with hidden conflicts, subconscious behavioral patterns or with painful truths. The audience is exposed to well known situations on stage, acted by unknown people in unusual settings. As a result, the atmosphere during the performances normally is tense.

It is therefore the thesis of this presentation that organizational theatre can be a powerful medium in organizational change processes. It can open conflicts, which are deadlocked or can render the undiscussible discussible.

Change effects of organizational theatre: Theoretical explanations

Questions on purpose and effects of organizational theatre are mostly asked from a causal point of view. The performance is thought of as a stimulus, which is supposed to bring about a foreseeable response, i.e. the response of the audience in terms of intended attitude change or new behaviour induced by the playwright. Consequently, the quality of organizational theatre would amount to a function of the extent to which the intended effects are reached. This is, however, too simple a perspective. The mechanistic idea of stimulus / response can not match the complex nature of organizational theatre. The stimulus/response-logic interprets the stimulus (in our case: the performance) as a cause which necessarily brings about a defined effect. The more recent discussion in aesthetics, leadership or change theory has radically challenged this logic. It has become clear that we cannot understand all

these complex relationships until we include the audience's perspective. Change has first of all to occur in the minds of the audience. We have therefore to explain the effect of organizational theatre from their perspective. The primary question is no longer how to design the stimulus but rather how the audience handles the confrontation and provocation the theatre brings to them. Or to put it more generally: why is theatre likely to promote behavioural change?

The observation of the observation

Let us start with the performance. The audience (department, division etc.) experiences the performance. In doing so the people do not observe primarily actors and a (good or bad) play, they observe the result of observations others have made in their organization, i.e. the observations of the author, the director, the stage designer and the actors. Members of the audience watch their daily work routines, their conventions, deadlocked conflicts between departments etc. performed on stage from the angle of the artists resulting from their (professional) observations and their construction of the observed reality. These strange observations, communicated on the stage confront the members of the audience (the observer of the observations) with a new reality, which differs from their usual construction of reality. In other words, the organizational theatre is likely to bring about a splitting experience, it divides the reality into the usual reality construction and the theatrical reality, i.e. the reality as it appears on stage. This "duplication" (Luhmann 1997) is the core process for understanding the change effects of organizational theatre. Duplication of reality means to set up a platform, which allows for observing the taken for granted reality construction and thereby making it reflexive. It puts the former reality construction in perspective. It enables the audience to view two different and simultaneous realities and in recognizing these as disparate it initiates a process of reflexion: *"Why do we do what we do the way we do it?"*. Furthermore, observing the own reality through the eyes of the artists ("second order observation") makes something very special happen: the

former reality construction becomes a contingent one. The experience of the division of the reality into two realities and through the observation of the observations gives the former reality construction a contingent character, it makes it apparent that it could be different. The seemingly inevitable construction and explanation of daily routines gets rid of its inevitability. In a certain sense, the theatrical duplication of reality brings some alienation from the usual way of thinking; it imposes disorder.

To put it differently: organisational theatre confronts the members of the audience with a different perspective of their own reality and thereby initiates a closer examination of the habituated patterns of behaviour, established perceptual constructions or prejudicial views.

This analysis refers to the potential role and relevance organizational theatre can play in organizational change processes. The duplication effect can dissolve long standing perceptual rigidities and routines. Without doubt, there are many other approaches which aim at achieving similar duplicating effects (benchmarking, organizational surveys etc.). However, only organizational theatre has the very specific potential to make a second order observation really happen. Thetheatrical form is likely to get people interested in duplication of their own reality, and to get them emotionally involved into the whole process.

The duplication process is however not as straightforward as it might appear. It does not function like a "trivial machine" (von Foerster 1984). The experience of a second order observation does not produce unequivocal predictable results. Certainly, it makes things move, but there is no way to program tightly the whole process. The members of the audience have to find their way how to come to terms with the division of their reality. They work through this process on the basis of their own cognitive world and their sense making mechanisms (Weick 1995), which are, as is well known, always at variance. Furthermore, individual worldviews (Weltanschauung) are inherently complex.

As a consequence, organizational theatre can make things move. However, it is not a substitute for change management. And even more, it can do damage to expose people in this emotionalizing way to critical issues without any further reflection. It is therefore necessary to discuss the experiences and to integrate the duplication experience into an overarching change conception. This emphasizes the significance of adequate follow up activities and, more generally, of embedding organizational theatre into a broader conception of organizational change (Brown/Eisenhardt 1997; Schreyögg/Noss 2000).

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Post-event Effects of Theatrical Events in Organizations

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Post-event Effects of Theatrical Events in Organizations

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Abstract

This paper describes the post-event effects of theatre interventions in organizations. It is argued that organizational members that attend theatrical events engage afterwards in social sharing of emotion with their colleagues about the event. This small talk helps creating a common understanding of the event. Investigating this shared emotional knowledge helps finding the effects of the theatre intervention and it provides a solid ground for follow-up work by change agents.

Theatre is more than a metaphor for organizational life. Beyond the symbolic value there is an actual practice of theatre in organizations. On several occasions, like Christmas parties, product presentations on trade fairs, organizational annual meetings, company parties etc, it can happen that theatre pieces are staged for an audience of organizational members. Furthermore, theatrical events like improvisations, cabaret, dance theatre and the like are used to inspire, provoke and relax the corporate audience. Few disagree that these cultural events are entertaining, however, concerning effects that lay beyond entertainment the usual question is: Does it function?

Theatrical Events

Theatrical events are a more recent intervention tool in change management. It is the goal to use theatre techniques and tools to encourage organizational change. In this, theatrical events are foremost used to create awareness of problems and to stimulate readiness for change (Schreyögg & Dabitz, 1999).

Under the past 10 years there has developed a change management practice in several European countries that uses theatrical events for its cause. Somewhat less, also in North America theatre interventions have found their place. Theatrical events are staged in front of organizational audiences and they are designed to address specific problems of organizations. Typical themes are quality management, employee customer orientation, or problems after mergers. Often, the theatrical events are especially developed for the target organization and its specific problems at that moment.

In contrast to the previous use of theatre techniques in organizations the goal is not personnel development in role-plays, or entertainment on special occasions. Management

orders the theatre intervention as a means of influence. It decides the topics and the theatrical form. It is not uncommon that there is a dress rehearsal in front of members of management before the theatre intervention is staged in front of its predefined audience. In the end, attending the theatrical event is not voluntary for the audience, but a part of work time.

Effects & Functions

Theatre interventions are an interesting object of study from many points of view. Previous research has concerned forms, functions and effects. A variety of different forms have been identified. For example there are improvised theatre events, there are staged plays, or there are theatre interventions where the organizational members are asked to participate. In connection to different functions of theatre interventions, there has also appeared the urge to accompany these interventions with post-event activities, such as discussion groups or workshops (Schreyögg & Dabitz, 1999).

However, there is still very little known about the effects of theatre interventions on the corporate audience. Practitioners tend to emphasize a wide variety of different effects, without being able to sustain their arguments. My interest concerns therefore what happens AFTER employees have attended a theatrical event. What are the social consequences of theatre interventions in organizations?

Watching a theatrical event, with it close connection to problems of the own organization, can be expected to be an emotional event for members of the organizational audience. As recent research on emotional events suggests, consequences of experiences are to a great part expressed in social sharing of emotion after the event. The own experience is communicated in small talk. Rimé and colleagues found that social sharing of emotion is an everyday reality. Up to 90 % of all emotional events are shared with others, while there are no sex, age or cultural differences in sharing behavior. (Rimé et al, 1991; Christophe & Rimé,

1997). Thus, the best places to investigate the consequences of theatrical events are the small talk, and the discussion groups/workshops that take place after the event. Here, it can be suggested, the experience will be integrated into existing understanding and new understanding is created.

It can be observed that after experiencing a theatrical event, employees engage in social sharing of their feelings about the play, i.e. they talk about their experience. The sharing includes both, other organizational members and outsiders like family, partners or friends. When the emotional event is solely communicated to outsiders, then the knowledge of the event has exited the organization and is thus not of value to the internal social processes.

For the post-event effects of theatrical events it is crucial that organizational members talk to each other about their experience and recall those moments of the event that they hold for important. They do this to make sense of their experience and organize what they have seen with their previous knowledge. In this way, the theatrical event that they have seen is linked directly to structures and cultural parts of their organization. It allows reflecting the experience directly in respect to the organization and the own role within it.

In the same time, social sharing of emotion is also a way of regulating emotions (Frijda, 1986). The discussion enhancing function of theatrical events has found broad support and is acclaimed by the providers of theatre interventions. It has been hypothesized in research on social sharing of emotion that through the sharing process there develops shared emotional knowledge (Rimé, 1998). It means knowledge of how to feel, when encountering a certain life situation and how to feel about a certain subject or object (Shaver et al. 1987). The workplace as is a highly social environment in which emotional knowledge is produced and reproduced constantly. Thus, theatrical events, with their emotion eliciting function can be seen as possible moderators to the social emotional knowledge in an organization.

Conclusion

Through the sharing process after theatrical events, certain parts of the event become commonly remembered, i.e. an emotional knowledge is created among the employees. The employees align their evaluations of the play and their emotional reaction to the events that the play took up. Thus not only creating emotional knowledge for them but also for the organization. By concentrating on the emotional knowledge that is shared among onlookers, this research project helps to provide information on the effects of theatrical events. Especially, it guides future research on how the impact of theatrical events can be used in the follow-up work of change agents in organizations. It has been stressed that theatre interventions cannot stand alone, but have to be integrated into other change management tools. How to integrate and what to focus on is easier to determine, when it is known what is already commonly remembered. And what is commonly remembered expresses itself in social sharing of emotion. This way, investigating social sharing of emotion after a theatrical event can both measure the impact and help select topics for following group discussions and workshops. Thus it can be stated that the post-event effects of theatrical events are at least as important to the success of the intervention as the effects that occur meanwhile the artist are still performing.

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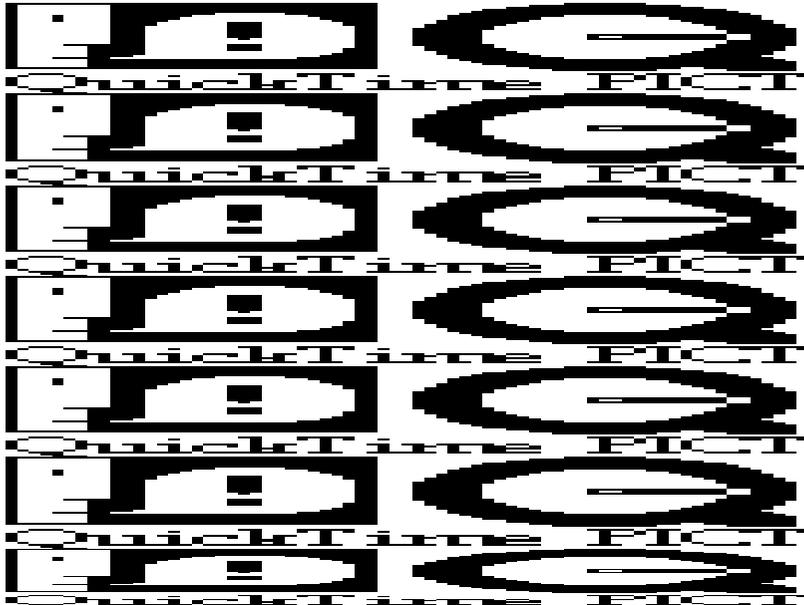Stockholm School of Economics
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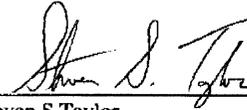
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