3ydd Gynhadledd Dysgu ac Addysgu

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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

Mindful Bodies: Theory and Practice in Undergraduate Theatre Studies

Margaret Ames and Andrew Filmer

‘As I go through the day, my extended body ebbs and flows, now absorbing things, now casting them back onto shore. I do not notice my body, but neither do I, for the most part, notice the bed on which I sleep, the clothes I wear, the chair on which I sit down to breakfast, the car I drive to work. I live in bodies beyond bodies …’

Drew Leder (1990) The Absent Body, p. 35

A key discourse in contemporary theatre and performance pedagogy is that of training, the use of exercises and techniques to prepare actors and performers for creative action. In Twentieth Century Actor Training (2000) Alison Hodge details how the rise of the theatre director, the development of different training systems and intercultural encounters have all played a role in the creation of new training principles and methodologies.

In Drama and Theatre Studies at Aberystwyth, as with many similar degree schemes in drama, theatre and performance, actor and performer training occupies a significant role in the curriculum. But how might such training operate in a context where a frequent obstacle is students’ vulnerability, lack of resilience and incapacity? What sort of training might be undertaken with fundamentally fragile bodies? And how might such training also encourage students to reassess preconceptions regarding theatre and performance?

This session will report and reflect on approaches to physical training and devising that have been developed as part of a re-structuring of the Drama and Theatre Studies degree in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies. Focused on two examples that draw on principles of experiential anatomy and the practices of endurance running, respectively, this session will consider how such approaches to training and devising might operate to encourage a greater sensitivity to the connections between body, thought, affect, action and location. Through foregrounding the role of the body in perception and aesthetics and testing how bodies might encounter and operate in particular places and sites we seek, in the words of former Professor of Performance Studies, Mike Pearson, ‘to enthuse and animate our students, to make sense of being here [and] to devise distinctive pedagogical approaches which utilize the particular geographical resources of Aberystwyth.’