

“Getting caught:” A collaboration on and off stage between theater and anthropology

Cristiana Giordano and Greg Pierotti

Our workshop is an exploration of and a cross pollination between research and narrative practices in theater and anthropology. By creating a dialogue between these disciplines in a laboratory format, we hope to pose questions and engage techniques in ways that will enrich our engagement with anthropological questions and performative productions. We recognize the value of the work of Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, and Erving Goffman in their exploration between anthropology and performance studies. This is not, however, a workshop on the anthropology of theater nor an experiment in performing ethnographies, but rather a lab where we use theatrical techniques to engage empirical questions and material. Rather than enacting our research, we put the elements of the stage (lights, sets, objects, sound, bodies etc.) into conversation with our research material. This generates surprising and often more affective analyses.

We explore how anthropologists can take from theater a more visceral posture towards research, and a more performative understanding of narrative that can translate into either a new kind of texts (essays, plays, short stories, installations, etc.), or into a revitalized existing practice of academic writing. On the other hand, theater makers can learn from anthropology a more nuanced understanding of political and cultural contexts, how to approach the different discourse formations around events and social issues, and to pay attention to the complexities of worlds and their grammars.

We use the practice of *Affect Theater*, a devising technique influenced by the Moment Work technique originated by Greg Pierotti's former theater company, Tectonic Theater Project, and Mary Overlie's Viewpoints. This theatrical devising technique is a practice for working with non-theatrical source material (interviews, archival documents, medical and legal reports, various media sources, etc.) to construct narratives for the stage. The practice of theatrical devising departs from traditional theater in that a finished script is not the starting point for the staging and direction of a play. Devising emerged as a means to revitalize how theatrical texts are created. It is a collaborative process involving the members of a company devising and writing together. Our workshop aims at extending this way of writing to other disciplines and their forms of textual production (books, articles, essays, installation, exhibits, etc.).

In our weekend workshops, we encourage participants to include their own empirical data as a part of the source material we utilize in our devising practices. This creates the opportunity for students and faculty to shift their relationship to their research through a collaborative engagement with our theatrical exploration.

Greg Pierotti is Assistant Professor in the School of Theater, Television, and Film at the University of Arizona. He has taught devising for twenty years and is co-author of *The Laramie Project*, *Laramie 10 Years Later*, and *The People's Temple*. His current projects are *B-More* and *Apology*.

Cristiana Giordano is Associate Professor in the Anthropology Department at the University of California, Davis. She is the author of *Migrants in Translation: Care and the Politics of Care in Contemporary Italy* (2014). Her current project is *Un-stories* which is the product of the cross-disciplinary collaboration with Pierotti.

