

Cambridge University Press

0521817293 - Theatre and Empowerment: Community Drama on the World Stage

Edited by Richard Boon and Jane Plastow

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Theatre and Empowerment

Theatre and Empowerment examines the ability of drama, theatre, dance and performance to empower communities of very different kinds, and it does so from a multicultural perspective. The communities involved include disadvantaged children in Ethiopia and the Indian subcontinent, disenfranchised Native Americans in the USA and young black men in Britain, people caught in cycles of violence in South Africa and Northern Ireland, and a threatened agricultural town in Italy. The book asserts the value of performance as a vital agent of necessary social change, and makes its arguments through the close examination, from 'inside' practice, of the success – not always complete – of specific projects in their practical and cultural contexts. Practitioners and commentators ask how performance in its widest sense can play a part in community activism on a scale larger than the individual, 'one-off' project by helping communities find their own liberating and creative voices.

RICHARD BOON is Professor of Performance Studies at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds. JANE PLASTOW is Senior Lecturer in Theatre Studies at the Workshop Theatre, School of English, University of Leeds. They are also the editors of *Theatre Matters: Performance and Culture on the World Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

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For Kitty Burrows

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RICHARD BOON is Professor of Performance Studies in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries at the University of Leeds, UK. His teaching and research interests lie primarily in political theatre of all kinds, in directing for the stage and in multicultural theatre. He is the author of *Brenton the Playwright* and of a number of articles mainly in the area of British political theatre of the twentieth century, and is co-editor, with Jane Plastow, of *Theatre Matters: Performance and Culture on the World Stage*.

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SANJOY GANGULY was active in Communist politics as a student.

Disillusioned by its centralist tendencies, he left the party to search for a political culture of dialogue and democracy. He began working in theatre in rural Bengal in the early 1980s. His encounter several years later with Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed, coupled with his own passionate commitment to the creation of a more just and equal society, led him to found Jana Sanskriti, an independent organisation committed to the use of theatre to conscientise and empower the communities it serves. With more than thirty active theatre groups associated with the group, Jana Sanskriti is now the largest organisation of its kind in India.

MICHAEL MACMILLAN is a black British playwright and theatre practitioner. He is currently researching in the area of black British theatre at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, and was until recently Writer-in-Residence at the School of English, University of Leeds, UK.

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Sounds and Gestures of Recollection, edited by Richard Cándida Smith) offer analyses of cultural responses to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

JANE PLASTOW is Senior Lecturer in Theatre Studies and Deputy Director of the Workshop Theatre, School of English, University of Leeds, UK, where she teaches primarily in the areas of African and developmental theatre. She is also Director of Leeds University Centre for African Studies. She has worked on a variety of theatre projects in Africa since the 1980s, primarily in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, and is at present closely involved in developing Eritrean theatre in the post-liberation period. She has written widely on emergent Eritrean theatre and is the author of *African Theatre and Politics*.

RICARDO VILLANUEVA has acted, directed and written for Chicana/o Teatro since the mid 1970s. He earned his PhD under Martin Banham at the Workshop Theatre, Leeds, in 1994. He now teaches Theatre and Ethnic Studies at California State University, Sacramento.