

Bourdieu in the Studio by Evi Stamatiou

Foreword by Jonathan Pitches

Flicking through the last few years of issues in the journal I co-edit with Libby Worth, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, it is not difficult to see what is preoccupying the community of practitioner-researchers in performer training. In just over a dozen years of publication, the landscape of research in the training studio has shifted radically. Following on from the critical turn that gave birth to this journal, we are now witnessing another development - a decentring turn - manifested in a number of different guises. Digital technology has decentered the training studio, supercharged by the pandemic; an ethics of care has grown up, often reflecting back critically on practices of physical or emotional coercion, and troubling long-established orthodoxies; and the sweeping movements of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo have led to serious and overdue rethinking about representation, access, agency and the means for destabilising the stubborn hierarchies endemic in a broad range of institutions dedicated to actor training.

In this context, Evi Stamatiou's *Bourdieu in the Studio* offers a timely and rigorously organised blend of philosophical discussion and practical invitation. In calling for, and modelling how, studios can be decentred, she complements recent, and already influential, work by, for instance, Lisa Peck (*Act as a Feminist: Towards a Critical Acting Pedagogy*, 2021) and Amy Mihyang Ginther (*Stages of Reckoning: Anti-racist and Decolonial Actor Training*, 2023). Stamatiou's focus is canny: playful yet determinedly focused on the matter in hand. Her term 'Ludic Activism' beautifully captures that balance: advancing a critical pedagogy which, drawing on Bourdieu, brings to the fore unconscious or unspoken biases in the studio whilst remaining resolutely lively and mischievous – as the documented workshop title illustrates: *Serious Says in Funny Ways*.

Her call for an 'authorial actor' will chime with many whose agency has been reduced along the long rocky road of actor training; it will inspire the next generation of trainers to challenge the long transnational history of actors' disempowerment. And, evidently, this is not done in abstraction with this publication. The proof is laid bare across the book, both in prose and in moving images, as the application of a complex Bourdieusian lexicon is explored by Stamatou's group of collaborators in the Practice Research laboratory. As she freely acknowledges, this is still a work in progress and this book only a contribution to the wider field of critical pedagogy in performer training. But the promise this book brings of combining reflexivity and positionality in the studio with social agency outside of it is undoubtedly convincing; the view of a future training ethos based on alliance not compliance, compelling.

Jonathan Pitches

Co-editor of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*

Head of School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds.