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### **The political features in interactive theater performances, (Tale of overseas as a model)**

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#### **Abstract**

Intellectual effectiveness is one of the concepts that has proven its distinguished role in various fields of life, including the arts in general, and theatrical art in particular. As it is possible to benefit from the mechanisms of its work followed in the works of the theatrical field, which contributes to the development of the show according to its returns achieved in the fields of life, including the political aspects and its presentation and treatment intellectually and performance in the political and interactive theatrical performance, The benefit from employing it is greater and more effective, because it achieves intellectual treatments and realistic proposals in a visual theatrical manner, and the treatment is carried out with the participation and presence of the spectator simultaneously, in addition to the subsequent treatments that follow outside the theater, Thus, the method of working according to the principles and characteristics of the political and interactive theater is one of the goals that achieve social and political reform alike.

Therefore, the current research included four chapters. The first chapter dealt with the research problem, which was represented in (the political features in the interactive theater performances). The first chapter also included the importance of the research, its goal and its limits, and ended with defining the terms. The second chapter included (theoretical framework), the first topic (political theater), and the second topic (interactive theatre). The third chapter included the research sample, the research tool, the research and analysis method for the presentation of the play (Migrant Story), and the fourth chapter included the results of the analysis, the most important conclusions, recommendations and suggestions. and list of sources.

### ● **Research problem**

The art of theater entered various fields of social, political and religious life, and was in direct contact with the surrounding circumstances, which led to develop this art based on social developments, and because theater is an art linked to the basic degree of social life and the daily lived reality, it went towards establishing rules and artistic contents according to the principles that touch on human nature in direct and indirect expressive forms. The art of theater has benefited from psychology, psychoanalytic theories and conditional reflection theory, as well as from social sciences and anthropology in building theatrical material and the character of the performer. Perhaps what distinguishes theatrical art in general is the live and direct encounter with the spectator, in contrast to other arts that depend to present the technical message in a prepared and executed form.

The overlap of theater with the reality of lived life in all its course, including politics, had an important impact in developing the formulation of theatrical performance, to create a fundamental intellectual approach and real treatments aimed to establish and build a conscious self and to build communication and interaction from the stage of writing the text to the presentation, and with the aim of changing life, to draw an effective intellectual road map, and according to a disciplined and precise style. Based on this, the research problem can be formulated in the following question: (What are the political features in interactive theater performances?)

### ● **The importance of research and the need for it:**

- The importance of the research lies in the manifestations of political features in interactive theatrical performances, and the role of theatrical performance in awakening thought, awareness and interaction to bring the audience to the awareness of all political manifestations in a theatrical manner.

### **Research objective:**

The research aims to: (know the political features in interactive theater performances).

### **The first topic: political theater:**

The work mechanisms of German director Erwin (Pescatore) approach the style of his compatriot Berthold Brecht, as the two started from leftist thought and targeted their theater from the same class. The actor's performance in the political theater, as is the case with the epic theater, carried provocative, exciting and motivating contents for the audience by raising educational topics related to the life of this class. On this basis, Pescatore worked to "transform the theatrical performance into a strong demonstration of the solidarity of the working class. The organizations of the proletariat made up the majority of the spectators, and the representatives of the proletariat had to unite all of them together to achieve their

common cause." (As he used this method to stimulate the recipient's mind culturally and awareness-raising through the information that his theater dealt with, which carries connotations that affect the recipient, Piscatore was keen to present his "theatre, in its documentary form, as a place for education, enlightenment, and awakening the awareness of the spectator." Since his theater belongs to the working class, therefore, Piscatore would choose his representatives from the same class, as the actor sometimes takes fixed characters that have an impact on the recipient, and through these characters creates a kind of discussion of the contents presented, as some of Piscatore's representatives "play stereotypical roles." Like the butcher, the worker and the unemployed, their task was to create a discussion with the spectators, implicate them in what is happening in front of them, and present the bourgeois point of view and the point of view of the working classes.(3) Intellectual vigilance is achieved by injecting a set of preliminary information to be discussed and filtered, and then finding a solution to it through what the actor presents in his performance, and this explains why piscatore is keen that his representatives are from the working class because they are aware of the topics they will present regarding them and achieve the response to the class of which the actor is a part, According to Piscatore, the process of achieving communication between the actor and the recipient made it imperative that "the actors must be recruited from among members of the working class and not from among professional groups."(4) Piscatore's political theater looks at the audience as an important participant in the show, and the success of the show depends on that participation, as the audience's effectiveness leads to the process of refining information to reach the goal of the show. As "Piscatore wanted the actor to be an amateur rather than a professional, due to the nature of the main objective of his theater, which is to educate and incite the audience." (5) And he was not relying on ready-made texts, but was looking for political topics that fit his ideas on the one hand and provoke the spectator on the other hand, Thus, the proposed text would be the first step towards achieving the apostate action by the spectator, as Piscatore used to take his subjects "from documents, magazine pages and newspapers to present them on stage, using graphics, illustrations, slogans, comments, banners, documentaries and the magic lantern." (6)

Piscatore also relied on simplicity and clarity in presenting the content of the show to suit its themes and audience type to ensure that responses are achieved, and through it the actor can adjust and develop his performance according to the apostate position, as the performance of the actor at the Piscatore Theater "is subject to a serious system and the actor must work on clear goals far from the symbol and the suggestions. That is to say, in a clearer sense, with a clear understanding of the purposes, so that the representative performance can convey the ideas of the proletariat that are concerned with the political theater and which should be conveyed to the public of the broad sector.(7) Piscatore used all the possibilities available to him to achieve the goals of his theater and to be more like simplified means of explanation for the recipient, so that the show resembles

the mirror who confronts him with the fact that he is subject to the tyranny of the authority and incites him to get out of this reality.

To confirm this, the performance in the Piscatore Theater acquired "a narrative and descriptive character, with resorting to all illustrative means (such as posters, statements, glass slides, and documentary films) to link the events being shown with the events of near and far history through a dialectical relationship." (8) Through what the actor presents from the information and what the recipient returns and then modifying the actor's act, the ultimate goal of the political theater is achieved, "which is to transform the theatrical performance into a revolutionary awareness tool that incites the spectators to reject what they see as exploitative relations and put forward the socialist solution as an alternative solution." (9) The foundations of the participatory space have an important role in achieving communication with the spectator by sending him educational messages criticizing the political reality. Piscatore presented some of his shows in different places that are in direct contact between the spectator and the actor, in which he stirs feelings, emotions and passion for what he sees. And every member of the audience is part of the spatial environment of the show, as Piscatore presented his shows "in the alleys and industrial neighborhoods [...] with the aim of completely integrating the spectator into the theatrical game." ( 10) In other words, Piscatore completely denies the idealism of the actor's space and makes this space available to the spectator, as he deliberately "eliminates the boundaries between the spectator and the stage in order to achieve intimacy in the theatrical performance so that it is more able to convince the spectator of political theory." (11) The processes of arousal and motivation, as well as the contents presented and the abolition of the isolation between the space of the actor and the spectator, all of this favors the inciting political aspect over the artistic side, as "we find the actor with piscatore transferring his struggle and his emotion in reality to the stage and referring it to a reality inflamed with enthusiasm and attached to the sincerity of the struggle experience, that is that piscatore began by categorically rejecting every technical process or practice to replace it with political premises and goals." ( 12) Hence, we can say that the intellectual vigilance in the Piscatore theater constitutes a basic principle in achieving the inflammatory goal sought by Piscatore's orientations towards enlightening and educating the audience and making it aware of what is happening. His philosophy in the theater emphasizes the strengthening of the class consciousness of his liberal audience, so it was necessary to provoke discussion more than to arouse admiration and fascination(13).

### **The second topic (interactive theater)**

#### **Augusto Boal:**

The nucleus of effectiveness and awareness in the performances of Augusto Boal's theater became clear through the stated political, social and economic issues that had an impact on the spectator who suffers from it in his daily life, so we see

him responding and interacting with the questions presented to him that mimic his tragic life. In his early days, Augusto Boal worked on topics that provoked the spectator, making him a participant in the theatrical performance and extracting what was inside him of tragedies. Thus, Boal is considered "the first to establish a troupe for the political folk theater in São Paulo in 1971, as he toured the slums and villages and presented through the poor and the peasants small theatrical works that express their daily suffering and the cases of oppression and vulnerability exercised upon them by the employers." (14) These topics occupied a wide space for Boal in his performances, which dealt with the participation of the spectator in them with the actor, meaning that there is an exchange of roles. This in itself is a feedback by relying on "texts that call for the public's effectiveness in making certain decisions and trying different solutions. Because they address real, urgent and daily needs and the search for solutions that are most appropriate for the entire community." (15) Accordingly, in writing topics for interactive theater, the process of predicting the topics that will achieve the goal of this theater, regardless of the presentation mechanism, whether dialogue, visual or indicative, must have a direct impact on the spectator, and this depends on the mastery of information and dialogues performed by the actor so the spectator is more prepared to receive the topics that are presented to him, and the text must "draw a natural role for each character, a role and define his identity precisely so that the spectators and the actors can identify the ideology of each of them." [The text can be represented in any style (realistic, symbolic, expressive,) except for the surreal or absurd style] ... [Its aim is to discuss real situations through theatre. ( 16) The first spark of Boal's interactive performances was launched by addressing the suffering of the Brazilian people from the injustice and oppression that they live in their daily lives, relying on the technique of improvisation, and through the performance of its representatives and the social and political topics and events that were taken from reality.

He intends to present messages with an educational and inflammatory content at the same time to insert them gradually into the spectator, and to note the extent of the response to them and the interaction with them. Therefore, the signs of interaction became clear in the show, as "one of his performances was a villager standing among the spectators, proposing to him an amendment in one of the positions of his play, which made him pay attention to the need to listen to people's voices, and then began to take a step towards presenting a theater more dependent on viewers] ...] Until one of the women stood in rebellion once because of his representatives' abuse of her proposed amendments to one of the texts, and the amendment was related to dealing with a traitorous husband according to the text of the play, which made him invite her to go up to the stage to show them how she wants the situation to play out. (17 ) The interaction and communication of the spectator in the theatrical performance comes through the role-playing game, and this takes place only if the spectator responds to the messages he receives from the actor. That is, the theater in Boal gives freedom to the spectator

by giving his observations to the show and making it an effective element on which he depends in presenting the performances, that is, the spectator is the main engine of the interactive theater. So, Boal means to provoke the spectator's mentality in order to force him to modify what is presented to him, and then put forward ideas that work to control the performance of the actor, and this is what effectiveness and awareness provide in its presentation.

In confirmation of this, he "seeks in his theatrical experiences through the People's Theater in Peru to train and qualify the spectator to turn into an actor. On the other hand, unconventional theatrical performances were characterized by their reliance on texts that call for the audience's effectiveness in making certain decisions and trying different solutions." (18) Taking these decisions by the spectator indicates his freedom. This freedom that Boal gave to the spectator made him a contributor to the success of the show, as he deliberately transformed "the theatrical game into a social event through which the spectators feel that they are free to interfere and participate in the theatrical performance and that they are on an equal footing with the actors [...] The exchange of roles and the participation of the audience actually began with the audience entering the theater hall." (19) Boal sought in his performances the principle of interaction with the spectator as a major element of the principles of interactive theater, taking advantage of the performance of his actors and the topics they present that have a direct relationship with the spectator, so Boal worked on the application of his experience "as a framework for analyzing these cultural phenomena, and suggests that these performances give people the opportunity to broadcast their values and beliefs in this event, and as a result the participants can get out of the restricted social roles." (20)

Boal was not satisfied with relying on dialogue within the performance of his actors, as he was interested in the actor's body and the improvisational movements he presents according to the idea taken from social life and affecting the spectator, so Boal used several methods to provoke the spectator and make him interact with the show and what he presents of alternatives or solutions to the problem he faces. So he used the bodies of the actors as images so as to create a kind of overlap and analysis by the spectator by asking them some questions regarding the images. This was Boal's concern for the represented body because he sees, "It distinguishes the physical text from the literal text, and it refers to the physical scenes as it is what makes ideas visible more than what spoken language does." (21) meaning that Boal wanted, through his theater and with the participation of his representatives, to be a striking tool for anyone who practices injustice towards society (Nunes et al., 2020).

Based on the foregoing, Boal's keenness on the spectator's participation in his performances came through a group of societal secretions that affected the sociological formation of society, and the re-establishment of the prevailing laws once again, as he believes that the theater should "be a weapon in the hands of the people, which exposes it to everyone who practices persecution, and this If the theater is not revolutionary in the full sense, then it may at least prepare its

audience for the revolution, and thus its transgression of traditional theatrical frameworks may make it an effective tool for change and reform.] [The spectator who suffers from oppression, as soon as he climbs to the stage, lives by projecting his condition, absorbing the situation he lives in in his life, and rehearsing to overcome it.”(22) In contrast, he has a willingness to intervene, suggest, amend, and accept the shock that makes him interact with the event presented by Boal, as effectiveness and awareness played an important role in the performances of Boal's theater through the continuity of the relationship, response, and allowance that occurs between the actor and the spectator actor. As all that Boal presented in his interactive theater is “giving the recipient an opportunity to free himself and think for himself and not give the actor an opportunity to think on his behalf and then translate the thought into action, so the theater becomes the act in the physical and real sense, as there is a partnership relationship to express the views of the spectators. On the basis that the issue that represents is their case, they ask questions about the axes of this issue and interact with it so that the spectator becomes part of the theatrical performance through the editing process and the ability to take action regarding a situation.(23) Boal used the actor's body to present to the recipient a picture of the state of oppression and persecution that is in fact happening on him in a provocative manner in order to make him communicate with the actor through analyzing the physical images and opening an opportunity for the recipient to participate in the discussion (Negi, Pant, & Kishor, 2021; Nouri, 2021).

This is the reason for Boal's interest in the actor and his body, which achieves the effectiveness of the theatrical performance, with the aim of tearing up the social identity at the moment of its appearance and interaction.

### **Indicators of the theoretical framework**

1. The representative performance is based on the effectiveness of shock and provocation through the information it presents that affect the social life of the recipient and constitute a motivation that paves the way for his participation in providing solutions.
2. The interactive process through communication and kinetic or indicative control achieved a statement or a hint between the sender and the receiver in the theatrical performance.
3. Repetition and affirmation of the compelling act is one of the stimuli that deepen the process of stimulating the spectator and put pressure on the psychological aspect that affects him, and they are methods adopted in intellectual vigilance.
4. The interactive theater is based on a performance style that bridges the gap between the world of the actor and the world of the spectator, and allows the actor to communicate directly with the recipient to generate a process of mixing and sorting the messages sent and received, and then final

filtering.

5. The interactive theater allows for the adoption of effectiveness and immediate realization through the process of asking and answering questions, or returning the scenes and the actual participation of the spectator, as well as adopting the deferred awareness that accompanies the spectator to his social life.
6. Intellectual vigilance focused on presenting a group of actions that rely on a news stimulus to achieve sudden automatic reactions to obtain convincing results that modify the course of presentation.

### **Chapter Three (Research Procedures)**

First: The research sample: An applied sample was selected to present ( tale of overseas) according to the following justifications: a. Approach it from the title of the search. B. Check the answers to the questions of the problem. c. It is closer to achieving the research objective.

Second: the search tool a. The researcher relied on the indicators of the theoretical framework as a tool for research analysis. Third: Research Methodology The researcher relied on the descriptive (analytical) method to analyze the research sample. Fourth: sample analysis. Theatrical play: Tale of overseas, written by the work team and directed by Nashat Mubarak Sliwa. Year: 2015 Location: Iraq / Nineveh (alternative location).

#### **Play (Tale of overseas)**

**Written by: the work team**

**Directed by: (Nashat Mubarak)**

Presentation idea:

The events of the show revolve around a group of problems that the displaced class suffered after the events of the areas that were afflicted by the control of ISIS. The work team relied on the compelling events that affected the categories of that class, but the process of persecution was not deeply entrenched due to the splitting of the idea into more than one direction, that is, the events went towards a group of sub-problems that ultimately poured into one category.

Analysis: In the introductory scene, the per formative act proceeds to a sad musical rhythm based on the sound of the flute. The act was divided into two groups, whose members were distributed on both sides of the stage, represented by entering the first group consisting of two characters whose movement indicated exhaustion and fatigue, to reveal the movement of a person leading his blind brother who is trying to walk with confused steps and staggering, they reached the left bottom of the stage, They lie on the ground and catch their breath with difficulty, and their dialogue indicates the sect to which they belong, as they were speaking in the Yazidi dialect. Another group of three characters, a young man and a young woman, on whom an elderly man leans, crosses the space from the



opposite side. The movement, like the movement in the first group, expresses exhaustion and fatigue. The old man falls on the opposite side of the first group. The performance was based on a stammering dialogue due to the effort expended, and the costumes indicated the sect to which they belong, which is the Christian sect, although the dialogue had employed the Arabic dialect in the scene. In both cases, the dialogue took the weeping method, with the first group shifting from the dialect of the sect to which they belong to the Arabic dialect. The interactive theater imposes a clear and understandable language by everyone in preparation for the interactive act. As for the process of employing the Yazidi dialect upon entering the first group, it is a clever treatment by the director of the work to hint at the sect, and that is why it appeared quickly. The action of the first group was similarly repeated in the second one, to confirm the act of continuous repetition as a stressor on the psychological side. Where the performative act of the actors constituted an embodiment of the suffering of every spectator sitting in the hall, an exciting and fundamental motivational promise, as it was exploited in the second part of the show.

The process of employing more than one group came in line with the process of repetition first, and created aesthetic act in distributing the groups over the spaces, and it was possible to exploit the space more by adding other groups to enhance the aesthetic aspect on the one hand, and to include the rest of the sects that were neglected, as the suffering experienced by the brothers Christians and Yazidis are the same suffering that included other sects, and here is added to the goals of the work the feature of strengthening national cohesion. The son who embodies the character (Waad), the broken character, who tries to please the family, the fiancée, and the boss, but everyone persecutes him because of his weakness. The work team has deliberately worked in building the character to form it with this weakness in order to dwell on the process of oppression and seek to provoke the spectator and provoke him to be sympathetic to the character. The girl's character (Linda) was also built on the ability to manipulate the performance and shifts between false courtship and direct domination, as well as the irony that achieved a comic act despite the harshness of the situation. The fiancée (Fadiya) leaves after her engagement to waad is broken, and both the father and the girl leave the space, and they prey on (Waad) with all kinds of persecution, so that he stands confused and contemplates what his life has become.

He was fired from work and left by his fiancée, and the accusations of the family, and here he decides to emigrate outside the country. The Joker enters with an intervention about presenting a new scene in the Kurdish dialect, a scene that simulates a new state of oppression for another character representing another sect, and here the work team fell into the problem of fragmenting the idea, Then another scene begins with a dialogue between the beloved (Allen) and the mother about the presence of a person who will attend her engagement, and here we find relaxation in the mother's performance mixed with glee, like any mother and she begins to ask about the person who is and what he does and when she tells her

that he (worker) wins the brother who was enslaving. Hearing the conversation, as well as the mother is surprised, indicating the disapproval due to the poverty of (Ammar), the girl tries to convince them in vain, (Allen) goes after the father enters. The discussion expresses a tense family atmosphere after the telling the father the news of (Allen).

The event escalates after the father's anger and vows to expel Ammar. The entirety of the performative act was based on rejection under the threat of Ammar's poor financial condition, which further emphasized the compelling act on Ammar's personality and humiliation, and in fact Ammar is expelled to surprise the event with the presence of another fiancé who is accepted by all Family members, Here, the work team play on the irony when introducing the character (dwarf) as the new fiancé and he is met with a warm reception and great respect only because he is rich, and when the girl is told, she gets angry and starts screaming and leaves, although the introduction of the character (dwarf), reinforced the act of oppression of the oppressed character (Ammar), but it created a new oppressed character, the character (Allen), which increased the dispersion of the spectator due to the large number of events and oppressed personalities. The Joker enters predicting the end of the show in its first part, reminding the spectators to agree to participate, and here, with the participation of the spectator, he sets out to identify the oppressed characters in the show, and here the Joker asks the spectators to put forward their treatments regarding the character (Waad), but the interventions, despite their large number, tend to go in other directions. One intervention was made regarding the persecuted personality (Waad), as one of the participants suggested contacting the employer in front of the father to clarify the sincerity of (Waad), which is a weak intervention and remained confined to the spectators' hall. The attendees presented a huge number of proposals, but they did not reach the core of the work, including the question about the cause of the displacement, or the conduct of psychological and professional rehabilitation programs, since all of these interventions were not subject to the law of the theater of the oppressed about finding an alternative solution to the oppressed personality only, and the need to propose a behavioral measure done by the persecutor to get out of the state of persecution he suffers.

### **(Results and conclusions)**

#### **First, the results:**

1. The work team through writing in the play (Tale of overseas) used the element of prediction in the construction of the theatrical act that stems from the events that touch the lived life reality, with the aim of making an impact, that the course of events in the presentation (tale of overseas) had an impact through the tragic and pressing process of pressure on the spectators present in the spectators' hall.
2. The show was based on the adoption of provocative and shocking behavioral

- acts achieved by the performative act of the forceful characters, with the adoption of exaggeration in persecution to create a strong motivator that moves the spectators towards participating in the second part of the show.
3. Through their performance, the representatives of the show were able to motivate and provoke the spectator, which led to dragging the spectator into a participation that would present various proposals, and through the intervention of the Joker, test modifications were made to the subject of the event presented as a raw material. The proposed modifications showed a move away from the centrality of the event, towards a side topics.
  4. The play worked on presenting events that created a movement for the mental act, which motivated the spectator to conduct a process of analysis and matching between the presented event and its lived reality.
  5. The Joker in the play seemed more controlling and relaxed in dealing with unexpected returns despite the show environment, the type of audience, and the multiplicity of topics that confused the hall.

### **Second: Conclusions:**

1. The political features overlap with the theater of its various types and times, and the difference lies in the subtraction formula.
2. The political features in the interactive theater performances are an instigating principle that tends towards an act of change.
3. Activity and perception in interactive theater are divided into two parts:
  - a. Indoors take place inside the theatre.
  - B. External accompany the spectator to his social life.
4. It is possible to benefit from the effectiveness and awareness in modifying the offers that are presented according to a daily program and for a long period of time, leading to a typical offer.

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### **Margins:**

\* **Erwin Peschator:** He is a German director and producer who is considered one of the founders of the revolutionary political theater. In his theater, he moved from left-leaning ideological dimensions, as he believes in Marxist thought, which is based on the idea of the group and on human action in creating relations with the environment of the spectator. - See: Mohamed Abdel Moneim Acting techniques in political theater, (Alexandria: Horus International Foundation, 2013), p. 20. Aqil

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**\* The play (tale of overseas):** It was shown in the Assyrian Club in Dohuk Governorate / the alternative location of the occupied city of Mosul at the time, by the Iraqi Ishtar Krupp for the Theater of the Oppressed, in 2015.

**\*\* Nashat Mubarak:** Actor, author and theater director, born in Nineveh Governorate / Qaraqosh in 1978. He presented many theatrical works and participated in various scientific conferences inside and outside the country. He holds a doctorate in theatrical arts. He held various administrative positions at the College of Fine Arts / University Mosul, the last of which was his assumption of the position the College. (A personal interview conducted by the researcher with the director of work at the College of Fine Arts, on Tuesday 14/8/2022 at exactly ten o'clock in the morning).