Introduction

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Embodied Performance. Mutuality, Embrace, and the Letter to Rome

Embodied Performance Analysis: method for interpretation

embodied performance: lived enactment

Invitation:
Enter the Story
Keynote Session 1 – Sarah Agnew

Embodied Performance Analysis

Through preparation, performance, and reflection, the performer-interpreter employs tools of the body, emotion, and audience, integrated with a range of pertinent exegetical approaches, to discern meaning in a biblical composition, presented in an Analysis comprised of Performance Interpretation and Critical Reflection.

Embodied Performance Analysis

Performance Interpretation
a telling, live or digital, individual or ensemble

Critical Reflection
discussing impact of composition on performer and decisions made for performance

Personal and particular
the performer influences the interpretation
the time and place and listeners influence the interpretation

Immersive and intuitive
internalise the composition – it is a world we inhabit
attend to your responses – you understand through your senses and feelings
Method

Step One: Preparation
  translation / adaptation, layout of ‘script’, rehearsal, preliminary performances
Step Two: Performance
  one or more performances or tellings
Step Three: Reflection
  ‘behind the scenes’ options and decisions

Tools

Body
  how the body moves in response to the composition
Emotion
  how the performer-interpreter feels in response to the composition
Audience
  how the performer-interpreter listens to the audience, envisaging their audience in preparation and anticipating at best they can how the audience might meaningfully receive this composition today

The body

One’s ‘body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of [one’s] “comprehension”’.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

The body – our task

ἀσπάσασθε
aspassaste

to interrogate our intuitive movements, and ask:
• is this saying something about the composition or
• is this saying something about me?
• what do I keep from this movement, which will speak helpfully in mediation and interpretation of this composition for this audience today?
Emotion

Emotion, affect, feelings, passions, humours, moods?

affective feelings

How much can we say between the words?
An important question for interpretation and the form of interpretation is: Will I include comment
• within the performance, breaking out with asides
• alongside it as sermon or lecture or conversation
• or not at all?
If the latter: how much can my gesture, tone, expression, emotion, say between the lines of problematic portions?

Emotion

By identifying and examining our feelings, we
• allow emotion to show us meaning
• allow our own story its space as it butts up against the Bible – and find meaning there
• allow us time to process our own story and to get out of the way

Audience

From theatre studies we learn that the audience, with their presence, attention, responses and energy, as well as their discovering and making meaning for themselves, are co-creators in the performance moment as much as performers, directors and the creative and technical teams.

Helen Freshwater

Audience as interpretive tool

• in the imagination of the performer-interpreter while preparing the text
• in the performance moment
Micah 6:1–8 – Audience

Divine names
• Translate ‘BREATH OF LIFE’ for YHWH (Adonai / The Lord)
• ‘They’ and ‘Their’ – non-gendered, plural pronoun
• Translate ‘Holy One’ for El (God)

Micah 6:1–8 – Audience

Word plays and aural links
• Consistent translation of rib – ‘case’ (NRSV case, then controversy)
  when the original language uses the same word / word group, do so in translation where possible to retain aural links for listeners
• La ah – ah la – in translation, seeking wordplays with contrast up/down, and rhyme ‘worn’ / ‘brought’
• ‘Just acts’ – link expectation with Divine nature

Micah 6:1–8 – Audience

Cultural capital
• Moses, Aaron and Miriam – their equality is important
• Repeat of ‘remember’ – the important thing is to remember, when audiences today may not know the story they are urged to remember

Micah 6:1–8 – Body

• Gesture suggests bringing gifts to placate the Divine
• Posture and voice indicate change of speaker
Micah 6:1–8 – Emotion

• Desperation in scene two
• Pause – hold the emotion
• Emotional shift through the pause / silence – desperation to calm reminder
• ‘Only’ – pace and pause for impact

Micah 6:1–8
Personal and particular

• Translation: ‘house of slaves’ NRSV ‘house of slavery’
Breath of Life restores identity: from slaves to ‘my people’

Prayer: ‘What is good’
Micah 6:1–8