

Annuß, Evelyn, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

Staging the ‘National Community’: On Post-dramatic Nazi Theater

The chorus as a non-protagonist stage figure plays a central role in contemporary post-dramatic theater aesthetics and is often used to question the notion of national identity. From this perspective, my paper looks back at a complementary, vastly discounted tradition within the history of German theater: During early national-socialism huge choruses were used to perform collectivity, i.e. stage the emergence of the ‘national community’, within a ritualistic open-air theater of the masses – the so-called Thingspiel. Can this specific brand of national-socialist theater already be seen as a genuine modern form of post-dramatic aesthetics? What was the specific dramaturgical function and formal principle of its usage of the chorus? And in which way are the experiments of the Thingspiel movement (1933-1936) linked to today’s post-dramatic performances on stage, which tend to deconstruct the phantasma of a German national collective?