Equalizing Theatre and Philosophy: Laruelle, Badiou, and gestures of authority in the philosophy of theatre

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Abstract

In this article I engage François Laruelle's notion of 'non-standard' aesthetics to provide a critical perspective on Alain Badiou's various pronouncements on the philosophy of theatre. Whilst in works such as In Praise of Theatre (2015), Badiou initially appears magnanimous in relation to theatre's own thinking, and indeed to demote the function of philosophy in relation to an ontological privilege now accorded (by him) to set theory, I will argue that this very benevolence, from a Laruellian perspective, constitutes another form of philosophical authoritarianism. That is, whilst Badiou famously describes theatre as 'an event of thought' that 'directly produces ideas' (Badiou 2005a, 72), this article draws from Laruelle to suggest that he ultimately positions himself as the authority on what 'counts as theatre properly speaking' (Badiou 2013, 109); performatively positioning his own thought as normative exception and as the gatekeeper to that exception.

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Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca is Reader in Theatre & Performance and Director of the Centre for Performance Philosophy at the University of Surrey, UK. She is author of Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance, and editor of Deleuze and Performance; Encounters in Performance Philosophy (with Alice Lagaay) and Manifesto Now! Instructions for Performance, Philosophy, Politics (with Will Daddario).

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