



Reinventing Drama: Acting, Iconicity, Performance (Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies)

Bruce G. Shapiro

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Dramatic performance involves an intricate process of rehearsal based upon imagery inherent in the dramatic text. A playwright first invents a drama out of mental imagery. The dramatic text presents the drama as a range of verbal imagery. During rehearsal, the actors cultivate this verbal imagery within themselves. The performance triggers this cultivated mental imagery, thereby enabling the actors to reinvent the drama in the presence of an audience. This interplay of dramatic imagery constitutes the heart of the process of iconicity. The premise of iconicity is that in dramatic performance actors use the same neural architecture that people use in their daily lives to execute events. The core of this neural architecture is the brain's capacity for internally generating, reduplicating, storing, and triggering imagery. The process of iconicity draws on the actor's use of this mental capacity. This book explores the principles of iconicity and develops them as a process for acting and staging dramatic performances.

This book draws together critical and literary theories and neuropsychology to provide a new artistic process for dramatic performance called iconicity. The first part of the book provides a theoretical perspective on the principles of iconicity. Included are discussions of the nature of dramatic performance, the ideology and process of acting, and the importance of emotions to drama. This initial exploration of iconicity sometimes refers to practice; however, the ideas presented in the first part of the book largely provide a foundation for the second part, which is more practically oriented. The second part gives close attention to the various components of the iconicity process. It explains dramatic structure and identifies and defines the four strands of iconicity: events, dialogue, interactions, and performance. Throughout the volume, numerous plays are used to provide examples of how the iconicity process works.

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