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# Collective creation in contemporary performance

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## ABSTRACT

The paper *Collective creation in contemporary performance* presents collective creation under both the conceptual and historical aspects, in a dualistic structure. The first chapter analyzes collective creation through its two manifestations, aesthetically-oriented theatre, focused on producing artistic works, and community or applied theatre, preoccupied with using theatrical tools in order to develop extra-aesthetic projects, belonging to the educational or therapeutic artistic spectrum. The second chapter operates with a comparative approach of the collective creation principles, in the work of three major and longstanding performing arts companies: The Living Theatre, Odin Teatret and Théâtre du Soleil.

Political theatre is a concept connected to the beginnings and further development of collective creation, to be named devised theatre starting with the '90s. Initially, the first proposals of work in a collective creation system are tied to the respective *Zeitgeist*, namely to the protesting and politically involved impetus of the '60s. Companies interested in collective creation envision an alternative lifestyle juxtaposed to the artistic practice, belonging to the same leftist, democratic, non-hierarchical model. However, such a type of social organization emerges as an utopia rather than a viable model.

Later on, new conceptual contributions by performing arts theorists allow for a widening of the definition of political theatre, so that it includes not only themes, texts and ideological or propagandistic approaches, but also innovative artistic practices. In this sense, political theatre includes theatrical experiments in which narrative conventions and the relationship between stage and the audience are renegotiated. Extensive writings of the practitioners discussed in the paper's second chapter certify their theatrical work as being experimental, created as a research on performative methodologies.

Therefore, collective creation appears as more than a mere emulation of leftist ideology. Although its beginnings are largely influenced by an ensemble of left wing ideas circulated in the '60s in bohemian circles where collective creation practitioners were regulars, this artistic practice develops extensively, without exhausting its resources when lacking an ideological antagonist. Collective creation (referred to as devised theatre in the last two decades) exploits the potential political aspect in a transformative sense. Devised theatre becomes a source of theatrical innovation and research, in which the permanent reinvention of conventions and the rethinking of the relationship between performers and audience generates new theatrical forms.