

Making Performance Devising: Histories and Contemporary Practices

Performance devising is a collaborative process in which performers create work without a pre-written script. It is a dynamic and flexible approach to theater that allows performers to explore their creativity and develop their own unique artistic voice. Devising can be used to create a wide range of performance styles, from traditional plays to experimental works.



Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices by Emma Govan

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History of Performance Devising

The roots of performance devising can be traced back to ancient Greece, where actors would often improvise their lines and movements. In the 16th century, the Italian playwright Carlo Gozzi began to develop a method of devising called *commedia dell'arte*, which involved actors creating characters and scenarios on the spot. In the 19th century, the Russian director Konstantin Stanislavski developed a method of devising called the

Stanislavski System, which focused on creating realistic and authentic performances.

In the 20th century, devising became a popular approach to theater in Europe and the United States. In the 1960s, the British theater company Forced Entertainment began to develop a method of devising called "devised theater." Devised theater is characterized by its use of improvisation, collaboration, and audience participation. In the 1970s, the American theater company The Wooster Group began to develop a method of devising called "postmodern theater." Postmodern theater is characterized by its use of fragmentation, appropriation, and intertextuality.

Contemporary Practices of Performance Devising

Today, devising is a widely used approach to theater. It is used by theater companies of all sizes and in all parts of the world. There are many different methods of devising, and each company has its own unique approach. Some common methods of devising include:

- **Improvisation:** Improvisation is a key element of devising. Performers use improvisation to explore their characters, develop their scenarios, and create their own unique material.
- **Collaboration:** Devising is a collaborative process. Performers work together to create the work, and they share their ideas and experiences.
- **Audience participation:** Devising often involves audience participation. Performers may ask the audience for feedback, or they may even invite the audience to participate in the performance.

Devising can be used to create a wide range of performance styles. Some of the most common types of devised theater include:

- **Traditional plays:** Devising can be used to create traditional plays, such as comedies, tragedies, and dramas.
- **Experimental works:** Devising can also be used to create experimental works, such as performance art and multimedia theater.
- **Community theater:** Devising is a great way to create community theater. It allows people from all walks of life to participate in the creative process.

Benefits of Performance Devising

There are many benefits to performance devising. It is a flexible and dynamic approach to theater that allows performers to explore their creativity and develop their own unique artistic voice. Devising can also help performers to develop their skills in improvisation, collaboration, and audience engagement.

If you are interested in learning more about performance devising, there are many resources available. You can find books, articles, and videos on the subject. You can also attend workshops and classes on devising. And if you are interested in working with a theater company that uses devising, there are many companies that are looking for new members.

Performance devising is a powerful and versatile approach to theater. It allows performers to create their own unique work and to explore their own creativity. If you are interested in learning more about devising, or if you are interested in working with a theater company that uses devising, there are

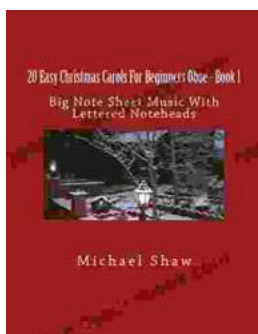
many resources available. So get involved and start making your own theater!



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