

Public Abstract

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Title:Devising and Collective Organization in the San Francisco Mime Troupe's History

The evolution of the collective structure and use of devising in the San Francisco Mime Troupe's history are intertwined with one another. In order to understand this relationship, and discover what it might contribute to the history of devising practice in the United States, I analyze a play from three separate eras during the Mime Troupe's existence. These are: *A Minstrel Show, or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* (1965), *Ripped Van Winkle* (1988), and *Ripple Effect* (2014). Using sources that are widely available to the public, I examine the public face of the Mime Troupe, and how the group's devising practice has been described and evident through their performance history.

In each chapter, I address Troupe leadership, what they said publicly about their creation process, and critical and public reactions to the performances. Though the Troupe still defines itself as a collective, the presence of strong central leadership and a guiding artistic vision have been central to the Troupe's success and longevity. By examining the relationship between the leadership, structure, and artistic practice of the Mime Troupe, a picture of their devising process forms. This picture is part of the overall tapestry of devising practice in the United States. Through the evolution of the Troupe's leadership, organization, and creative practices, the establishment of the Mime Troupe as an integral part of the San Francisco artistic landscape is evident. This can help illuminate the unique and important place that devising companies have in the United States' theatrical past and present.