

The Performance of Sports Commentary: Post-dramatic theatre as a model to examine the performance of the sports commentator

Abstract

This paper uses the languages of contemporary performance to propose a new model for the analysis of sports commentary. Scholarship that has considered the performance of sports commentary, from Bryant, Brown, Comisky & Zillman (1977a, 1977b, 1982) Frederick et al. (2013), and Whannel (1992) all position the role within a dramatic tradition, examining the practice through traditional dramatic structures. Whilst these analyses highlight important features of the dramatic content of sports commentary, the use and frequency of 'dramatic' language, the focus on enmity or on particular narrative drives, the dramatic form doesn't fully account for the performative mechanism of the sports commentator – what the commentator *does*.

The paper proposes the consideration of the performance of sports commentary from a post-dramatic theatre (Lehmann, 2006) tradition inviting new ways of exploring the impact of sports commentary as part of the broadcast spectacle of professional sport. Reframing the performance of the commentator from a post-dramatic theatre tradition presents the dynamic of sports commentary as a live game of language (Turner, 2009), or task-based improvised storytelling, that through its very nature frames, reframes and enframes (Žižek, 2014) the live event. Considering sports commentary through Fischer-Lichte's notion of performance as event (2008) the paper examines how sports commentary changes the way an event is received and subsequently perceived.

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