Abysmal Laughter

STUART GRANT
Monash University

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Abstract

Between March and June 2008, a group of fifteen Performance Studies and Communications students at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia undertook a course on comedy based on a series of six lectures by Agnes Heller in which she outlined ideas from her book, Immortal Comedy. Subsequently, the students attended a number of comedy shows and other events to perform practical group phenomenological research with an aim to activate the ground opened by Heller’s theories through description of actual comic phenomena. The outcomes— theoretical, experiential and, most surprisingly, pedagogical—were remarkable in their demonstration of the efficacy of group phenomenology as a method of intertwined practice, research and learning.

Author Biography

STUART GRANT, Monash University
Lecturer in Performance Studies, Philosophy of Performance. Research into Time and Performance.