



*Perspective Article*

# Performing Drama as A Space of Negotiation of Identity, Culture and Power in Contemporary Society

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## Abstract

Performing drama has increasingly emerged as a critical cultural practice in contemporary society, functioning not merely as artistic expression but as a space where identity, culture, and power are actively negotiated. This perspective article reflects on performing drama as a socio-cultural arena in which dominant narratives are questioned, marginalized voices are articulated, and collective meanings are reconfigured. Rather than presenting empirical findings, this article offers a conceptual reflection grounded in contemporary art and cultural studies. It argues that performing drama operates as a dynamic site of negotiation between tradition and modernity, local and global cultures, and authority and resistance. By situating drama within broader social and political contexts, this article highlights its potential role in fostering critical awareness and cultural agency in contemporary society.

**Keywords:** performing drama; cultural negotiation; identity; power; contemporary society.

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary society, art can no longer be understood as a neutral or autonomous aesthetic practice. Particularly within Global South contexts, artistic expression is deeply entangled with historical legacies of colonialism, uneven modernization, and persistent social inequalities. Performing drama occupies a distinctive position within this landscape as a live, embodied, and dialogical form of art that directly engages with lived social realities [1]. Through performance, drama creates a space where narratives of identity, culture, and power are not merely represented, but actively negotiated in relation to historical memory, social hierarchy, and cultural transformation [2] [3].

The rapid transformations brought about by globalization, digitalization, and cultural hybridization have intensified these negotiations [4]. In many societies of the Global South, global cultural flows coexist with strong local traditions, producing complex cultural tensions rather than linear progress [5][6]. Contemporary performing drama increasingly moves beyond conventional theatrical structures by incorporating experimental forms, interdisciplinary practices, and participatory engagement [7]. These strategies allow drama to respond to fragmented social experiences shaped by economic disparity, cultural pluralism, and the coexistence of multiple value systems [8]. As a result, drama functions not as a fixed representation of culture, but as a process

through which meaning is continuously produced and contested.

Within postcolonial and culturally diverse societies, performing drama often becomes a medium through which dominant narratives are unsettled and alternative perspectives are articulated [9]. Questions of identity related to ethnicity, gender, religion, language, and social position are staged as dynamic and negotiated rather than given [10]. Drama performance enables the articulation of voices that may be marginalized within dominant political, cultural, or institutional frameworks, positioning performance as a site of cultural agency and symbolic resistance [11].

This article adopts a perspective approach to understanding performing drama as a space of negotiation within contemporary Global South societies. Rather than examining specific performances or empirical cases, the discussion focuses on the broader conceptual role of drama as a performative practice embedded in unequal social and cultural structures [12]. By framing performing drama as a negotiated space, this article highlights its potential to mediate between tradition and change, local experience and global influence, as well as authority and resistance. In doing so, it underscores the relevance of performing drama as a critical cultural practice in societies undergoing continuous social transformation [13].

## **2. Performing Drama Beyond Aesthetic Autonomy**

In many Global South contexts, performing drama cannot be separated from everyday social experience. Artistic practice often emerges from, and responds to, conditions of social negotiation, cultural plurality, and historical tension. As such, performing drama moves beyond the notion of aesthetic autonomy and becomes a form of cultural engagement that is inseparable from lived realities [14] [15].

Rather than functioning as a self-contained artistic object, contemporary performing drama operates as a process through which meaning is generated in relation to social structures and cultural histories. The presence of the performer's body, the shared temporality of performance, and the immediacy of audience interaction allow drama to articulate experiences that are often difficult to express through formal or institutional discourse. In this sense, drama performance becomes a site where social knowledge is embodied, enacted, and shared [16] [17].

The shift away from aesthetic autonomy is particularly significant in societies where art has historically been positioned either as a tool of cultural preservation or as a vehicle of ideological control. Contemporary performing drama resists such fixed roles by opening space for ambiguity, contradiction, and reinterpretation. Through experimentation and performative strategies, drama challenges dominant definitions of culture and art, positioning itself as a critical practice rather than a passive reflection of tradition or modernity [18] [19] [20].

## **3. Negotiating Identity in Plural and Unequal Societies**

Identity in Global South societies is shaped by overlapping histories, cultural diversity, and unequal power relations. Performing drama offers a platform for negotiating these layered identities by staging them as relational and contested processes. Rather than presenting identity as stable or homogeneous, drama performances frequently highlight fragmentation, hybridity, and transformation [21].

Through narrative construction, embodied movement, and symbolic gesture, performing drama allows performers and audiences to engage with questions of belonging, exclusion, and recognition. These questions are particularly salient in societies where cultural identity is closely tied to social hierarchy, religious affiliation, and historical memory. Drama performance makes these tensions visible by transforming abstract social categories into lived, affective experiences [22] [23].

Importantly, the negotiation of identity in drama does not aim to produce consensus or resolution. Instead, it creates a space where multiple interpretations coexist, reflecting the complexity of social life. By embracing uncertainty and multiplicity, performing drama encourages critical reflection on how identities are formed, regulated, and contested within broader social

structures [24].

#### **4. Culture, Power, and Symbolic Resistance**

In contemporary Global South contexts, culture is deeply entangled with power. Cultural expression is shaped by institutional authority, market forces, and inherited hierarchies that determine which voices are legitimized and which are marginalized. Performing drama operates within these constraints, yet it also possesses the capacity to challenge them through symbolic resistance [25].

Rather than confronting power directly, drama often employs indirect strategies such as metaphor, allegory, and embodied disruption. Silence, repetition, fragmentation, and physical tension become performative tools through which dominant narratives are questioned. These strategies allow drama to articulate critique without relying on overt political messaging, making it particularly effective in contexts where direct confrontation may be limited or constrained [26].

By foregrounding embodied experience, performing drama reclaims the body as a site of knowledge and agency. This emphasis is especially significant in societies where official narratives tend to privilege abstract authority over lived experience. Through performance, drama asserts alternative ways of knowing and understanding the world, positioning culture as an active field of negotiation rather than a static inheritance [27].

#### **5. Performing Drama as a Negotiated Cultural Space**

As a live and collective practice, performing drama creates a temporary cultural space in which meaning is co-produced by performers, audiences, and social context. This negotiated space is inherently unstable, shaped by interpretation, emotion, and positionality. The openness of drama performance allows it to function as a site of dialogue rather than closure [28].

In Global South societies marked by social inequality and cultural plurality, such negotiated spaces are particularly valuable. Performing drama enables forms of engagement that do not depend on formal authority or institutional legitimacy. Instead, it relies on shared presence, embodied communication, and collective interpretation [29] [30].

By facilitating dialogue across differences, performing drama contributes to the cultivation of critical awareness and cultural agency. It does not resolve social tensions, but it makes them visible and open to reflection. In this way, drama performance functions as a cultural practice that sustains negotiation rather than suppressing it.

#### **4. Discussion**

Understanding performing drama as a space of negotiation provides a productive lens for examining its significance within contemporary Global South societies. Rather than positioning drama as a passive reflection of social conditions, this perspective highlights its active role in mediating cultural meanings, power relations, and identity formations. Performing drama operates within complex social environments shaped by historical inequality, cultural plurality, and ongoing processes of social transformation. In such contexts, negotiation becomes a defining feature of cultural practice rather than an exception [31].

The emphasis on negotiation shifts the analytical focus away from fixed interpretations of drama toward its performative dynamics. Meaning in drama performance is not predetermined but emerges through interaction among performers, audiences, and social contexts. This openness is particularly relevant in societies where cultural authority is often centralized and hierarchical. Performing drama introduces alternative modes of communication that rely on embodiment, affect, and shared presence, enabling forms of expression that may not be easily accommodated within formal institutional frameworks [32].

From a Global South perspective, the negotiation of identity and power through performance reflects broader struggles over representation and recognition. Performing drama

offers a cultural space where marginalized experiences can be articulated without the necessity of conforming to dominant narratives. This does not imply that drama exists outside power structures; rather, it operates within them while simultaneously exposing their limits. The strength of drama lies in its capacity to reveal tensions between tradition and change, conformity and resistance without resolving them into simplified conclusions [33].

Furthermore, performing drama challenges conventional distinctions between art and social life. In many Global South contexts, artistic practice is deeply embedded in everyday experience, collective memory, and social interaction. As a result, drama performance often carries ethical and political significance even when it does not explicitly address political themes. Its critical potential emerges from how stories are told, whose bodies are visible on stage, and which experiences are rendered meaningful [34].

This perspective also underscores the relevance of performing drama in an era marked by rapid global change. Globalization and digital mediation have intensified cultural circulation, yet they have not erased local inequalities or historical asymmetries. Performing drama navigates these conditions by creating spaces where global influences and local experiences intersect and are renegotiated. In doing so, drama contributes to cultural resilience and adaptability rather than cultural homogenization [35].

Ultimately, viewing performing drama as a negotiated space expands its analytical and cultural significance. It invites scholars and practitioners to move beyond instrumental or aesthetic interpretations and to consider drama as a form of cultural labor that actively participates in shaping social understanding. Such a perspective is particularly valuable for engaging with contemporary societies where cultural expression remains a crucial site for articulating agency, resistance, and collective imagination.

## 5. Conclusions

This perspective article argued that performing drama should be understood as a dynamic space of negotiation within contemporary Global South societies. Through embodied performance and cultural expression, drama engages with issues of identity, culture, and power in ways that are reflective, critical, and transformative.

Rather than serving solely as entertainment or aesthetic display, performing drama emerges as a form of cultural practice that mediates between tradition and change, authority and resistance, and local experience and global influence. Recognizing performing drama as a negotiated space allows for a deeper appreciation of its role in shaping social awareness and cultural discourse in contemporary society.

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