

PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS: A COMPARATIVE CHART

Richard Schechner

A	B
1	
Arts	Restored Arts
Theatre, dance, etc	Bharatanatyam, Purulia, Chhau, etc.

Between these there is little or no phenomenological distinction making it very hard to tell A1 from B1 without doing a historical research – B1 heals seamlessly into A1. Both A1 and B1 have a “life of its own.” In both, performers know they’re “in a show” and audiences know they’re “watching a show.”

A	B	C	D
2			
Media fiction	Media simulation	Media “push”	Media “there”
Regular movies	Recreated especially for media, as were the BBC Celts	Without media there would be no event, as the 1975 agnicayana	Documentaries, news

A move to the right = decreasing dependance on media to make the event, though news items are edited creating a feedback between what “is” news and what media”makes into” news. Also a move to the right = an increase in narration, in suggesting an independent event that needs an observer outside “objectivity” explaining it. B2, C2, and D2 merge into one another. Only in A2 is the performer sure he is “in a show” and the spectator sure he is “wathching a show.” A recent form, “docudrama” combines A2 and D2.

A	B	C
3		
Theme parks	Restored villages made from fantasy and history	Restored villages made from history
Disneyland, Land of Oz, Dogpatch, etc.	Buckskin Joe, Frontierland, Columbia Historic Park, etc.	Plimoth, Smithville, Louisbourg, etc.

In A3 everyone knows they are “in a show” as spectators-participants or performers, in B3 and C3 even the performers begin to feel they are “in life.” But, paradoxically, B3 and C3 are very close to A1 and B1 where the event begins to have a “life of its own.” In A3 most of the machinery – mechanical and human – is hidden from the spectator creating fictive environment. In B3 and C3 there is an attempt- as at museums – to show as much as possible. But these days even museums are fictionalizing. For example, the Ice Age Art exhibit at the American Museum of Art History (1978 - 1979) was made mostly from simulated items.

Schechner, Richard [1983] - *Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila*, Calcutta: Seagull Books, p. 207.