Unit 4 – Community performance research: Synergy Theatre Project

Synergy Theatre Project works on humanising socially disadvantaged groups, in particular prisoners/ex-prisoners and youth. With this, comes the creation of theatre for those who are a part of the criminal justice system. The idea is to provoke emotions and attitudes of the audience and performers, in order to cultivate diverse audiences and give people a voice. By breaking down these social barriers between audience and performer, it helps to combat negative stereotypes that occur when talking about and with those from different backgrounds and life experiences. The company believes that art should be accessible to everyone, which helps to create unity in our community, and include social groups, as well as build self-esteem.

The company explores contemporary themes. From this truthful and urgent performances are created. The work is based on material that comes from close and far from the prison environment of prisoners/ex-prisoners, and their personal life experiences. Its themes explore the empowerment of giving voice to the less advantaged, which creates talking points for an entire community. Its themes humanise and help to challenge the preconceptions made about the criminal justice system. This works on re-gaining dignity.

The focus of their venues is on bringing the audience into spaces they can’t usually access, such as prisons. This also creates more controversy by creating a less mainstream stage. And more accessible to those who can’t usually access it. The idea is on non-traditional venues, such as prisons, which create more diversity into what theatre can become and transform to.

The target audience is diverse. This goes from mainstream to socially disadvantaged. This has particular focus on prisoners/ex-prisoners and young people, which the theatre is created by and performed to. Giving a more humanised approach to this audience gives them a voice and inclusion as a group and community.

I’m inspired by the inclusion of everyone, and trying to move past the idea that people aren’t their crimes, and there is more substance than just somebody’s actions. This shows tolerance and acceptance of others and offers help to take time and change. The fact that they go into prisons alone is inspiring as it gives opportunity for more controversial audiences, and humanises them to make theatre more available as it should be accessible to everyone. Using real life stories of unheard voices makes the audience feel, which is an overall objective for any theatre.

Here’s a list of potential ideas I thought we could include in our performance:

* Interviewing prisoners or ex-prisoners to create a piece from their experiences.
* Interview people affected by crime and take it to a prison.
* Using material relevant to our life experiences.
* Taking our performances to more socially disadvantaged groups.
* Introducing and including theatre with those who may not experience it.
* Talk about more challenging subject matters.