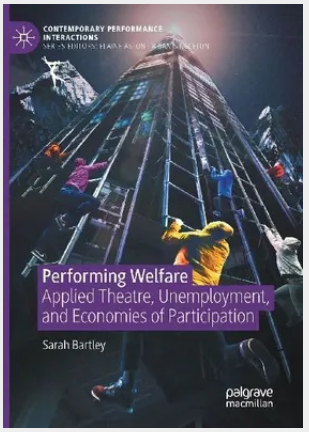
Bartley

Performing Welfare

Applied Theatre, Unemployment, and Economies of Participation



This book explores what happens to socially committed performance when state systems of social security are dismantled. Since 2010, a punishing programme of economic austerity and a seismic overhaul of the Welfare State in the United Kingdom has been accompanied by an ideological assault on dependency; a pervasive scapegoating of the poor, young, and disabled; and an intensification of the discursive relationship between morality and work. This book considers the artistic, material, and ideological consequences of such shifts for applied and socially engaged performance.
Performing Welfare reveals how such arts practices might reconstitute notions of work and labour in socially constructive ways. It focuses on the political potential of participation during a period in which classifications of labour and productivity are intensely contested. It examines the migration of discourses from state policy to the cultural sector; narratives of community and aesthetics of dependency; the paradoxes of visibility in creative projects with stigmatised participants; the implicit relationship of participatory performance to neoliberal productivity; and, the parallels between gendered divisions of labour, social reproduction, and applied performance.
It will appeal to students, scholars, and practitioners interested in applied and socially engaged performance, participation, community, representation, the welfare state, social policy, labour, and unemployment.

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