

Popular Entertainment as Bridge

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Abstract

The bascule bridge over The River of the Geats (Göta älv) in Gothenburg was completed in 1939. It was, and still is, an important bridge, combining the island of Hisingen with the mainland. Göta älv is a river that drains lake Vänern into the Kattegat, and is perhaps best known as the first leg of Göta kanal.

This paper uses popular entertainment as a way of depicting and describing the bridge. The aim is to discuss how popular entertainment, through its performance practice, can emphasize aspects from ordinary life. In what way can popular entertainment offer new alternative understandings of a bridge? The Swedish comedian Lasse Brandeby created a much loved and popular fictional journalist/talk show host during the 1980-ies, called Kurt Olsson. He became a well-known figure through several TV shows. A recurring segment in these shows were "the reports from everyday life", where Olsson made documentaries about trains arriving at a station, the gates opening at an amusement park, and so on. One of the most popular reports was from the Göta älv bridge, where Olsson follows the preparations for the opening of the bridge. He interviews people waiting while the bridge is open, and wraps the whole segment up as the bridge finally closes. He narrates and stages the excitement behind the opening in a characteristic and entertaining way. The paper uses this example to discuss in what way popular entertainment can act as a bridge. The aim is, therefore, to both present the bridge and to discuss how entertainment can function as a bridge, by renegotiating important topics from everyday life.