

CATR Conference 2023: Call for Session Participants (English Version)
Performing Shores / The Shores of Performance

I. Roundtables:

a. Puppet Theory

Convenors: Dawn Tracey Brandes (Dalhousie University) and Gabriel Levine (Glendon Campus of York University)

Online synchronous panel/roundtable (June 10-12, 2023)

On the margins of theatre scholarship, often treated as a critical sideshow, puppetry continues to experience a long-running resurgence in theatre practice. Over the past decades, notable puppet companies and artists have found success on stages in Canada and around the world (including mainstream theatre successes by Ronnie Burkett and Handspring Puppet Company, opera work by Improbable Theatre/Phelim McDermott/Julian Crouch and Blind Summit and musicals from *The Lion King* to *Shrek*). However, despite this robust artistic attention, there have been only a few concerted attempts to theorize contemporary puppetry. Following the groundbreaking 20th-century work of the Prague School and subsequent efforts in the semiotic tradition (Tillis), a small community of scholars has paid increasing critical attention to puppetry, with new anthologies (Routledge), monographs, and encyclopedias (UNIMA). Meanwhile, puppet practitioners and practitioner-scholars have generated keen insights out of their practice, and critics have sketched evocative thoughts about puppetry's "uncanny life" (Gross). Yet given puppetry's unique position in the landscape of material performance, it is surprising that it has not to this date produced a strong and coherent body of theory. Perhaps this is a result of puppetry's anti-systematic bent: as a discipline, puppetry is often abjected, lumped in with children's entertainment, or viewed as a minor curiosity in relation to major theatrical genres. In our view, however, the marginal position of puppetry—like other marginal positions—can give rise to acute theoretical insights that could help shift our understanding of key concepts of agency, materiality, embodiment, and animacy.

This panel gathers scholars and scholar-practitioners who seek to theorize the form and practice of puppetry from within. Contributions could be in dialogue with contemporary theoretical currents—including work in phenomenology, "new materialism," or "thing theory." They could also engage with Indigenous understandings of material and embodied being-in-relation. The aim of the panel, however, is not to import theory into a discussion of puppetry, but rather to generate theory out of puppetry's practical knowledge, historical permutations, and contemporary efflorescence. Cast aside, thrown into a heap, left on the shores by cultural gatekeepers, puppetry nonetheless persists and reinvents itself. Listening to puppeteers, to scholars of puppetry, and to puppets themselves, what new insights could emerge?

Possible topics could include:

- Theoretical explorations of themes like animacy, agency, or embodiment generated through puppet practice or spectatorship
- Puppet performance and the construction of identity, including race, gender and sexuality
- Indigenous puppet performance
- Theories of puppet spectatorship
- Investigations of puppet materiality
- Theorizing puppetry's political, ethical, epistemological, or ontological contributions
- Relationships between puppet and puppeteer, puppet and environment, puppet and non-puppet objects

Please submit an abstract (250 words) for a 15-minute presentation, along with a 100-word bio, to the organizers at puppettheoryCATR2023@gmail.com by April 14, 2023.

Dawn Tracey Brandes is an Instructor in the Fountain School of Performing Arts at Dalhousie University. Her work considers the theoretical implications of contemporary puppet performance, particularly in relation to phenomenological concerns. She has contributed chapters to edited collections like *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance* and *Performing Arousal: Precarious Bodies and Frames of Representation*, and articles to *Canadian Theatre Review* and *Puppetry International*.

Gabriel Levine is the author of *Art and Tradition in a Time of Uprisings* (MIT Press 2020). He co-edited *Practice* (MIT/Whitechapel 2018), and his writing has appeared in publications including *Performance Research*, *Liminalities*, *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, and *Canadian Theatre Review*. He has released numerous musical recordings on various labels, and his puppet-theatre projects have toured internationally. He is a Sessional Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Drama and Creative Arts Program at Glendon Campus, York University, and co-curator of Toronto's Concrete Cabaret and OBJECTO Festival. www.gabriellevine.net.

b. XR and the the Future Stage

Convenors: Kim McLeod (University of Guelph) and Laura Levin (York University)

In-person roundtable at Dalhousie University (June 15-17, 2023)

Structure of the session: 10 minutes presentations followed by 30-40 minute discussion

The field of theatre and performance has recently seen an upsurge in experiments with XR (extended reality) as an artistic medium. A term used to reference virtual reality, augmented reality, and mixed reality, XR has allowed artists to shift to safe delivery formats during the COVID-19 pandemic; at the same time, it has also offered creators new tools for

worldbuilding and spectatorship.

The goal of this session is to explore how XR performance challenges assumptions about what theatre is. We are inspired by provocations posed in “A Manifesto for the Future Stage,” a text composed by the Future Stage Research Group at metaLAB, which urges the performing arts industry to grapple with “new expectations for media, culture, and presence in a hyperconnected world,” while simultaneously accounting for the political effects of technological shifts. We will take up this challenge by featuring work addressing how XR theatre experiments align with, particularize, and critique the manifesto’s central tenets. Roundtable participants might consider these questions:

- Is physical co-presence required for theatre? Is XR leading to a new medium that is something else entirely?
- What are the limits of utopian thinking about intersections of theatre and new technologies?
- Do we push back against the manifesto’s claim that “performance isn’t a commodity” or does it suggest a political orientation to this work to carefully think through?
- Is “liveness plus” a generative concept helping us to articulate new media affordances, or are we looping back to old binaries between liveness and mediatization that push against the emergent nature of this work?

We invite proposals for this roundtable from artists and scholars in a range of career stages. Participants may offer position papers, papers about their own performance experiments, or performative writing, such as countermanifestos, composed in relation to the manifesto. Those interested in participating in the XR and the Future Stage roundtable should email a 250-word proposal to Laura Levin (levin@yorku.ca) and Kimberley McLeod (kimberley.mcleod@uoguelph.ca) by April 14, 2023.

C. At the Edge of Visible: Practice-Based Research, Scholarly Recognition, and the Challenge of Ethics

CONVENORS: *Natalie Álvarez (Toronto Metropolitan University) and Kim Solga (Western University)*

In-Person Roundtable at Dalhousie University (June 15-17, 2023)

Many researchers in our community identify as practice-based. In the course of our work, we routinely experience the need to communicate that work’s value to those familiar with more traditional, positivist, scholarly modes. We also often find ourselves struggling to justify our work’s logic, goals, and methods to our institutional research ethics boards (REBs), as we navigate their social science-driven protocols in order even to be allowed to begin our work.

Neither of these issues is new; PbR (or PaR) has been a part of theatre and performance research for decades now. What is, perhaps, new is an increasingly institutional drive toward equity, inclusion, and decolonisation. Could such a turn, perhaps, make space for practice-based researchers to begin to shift the dial on what kind of work is seen, heard, measured, enabled, and institutionally recognized?

The goal of this roundtable is to gather a wide range of perspectives on the ways in which scholar-artist and other practice-based researchers communicate the nature, value, and impact of their work to university administrators, and where and how they find creative ways to navigate the research ethics process. Our hope for this session is not only to share ideas and resources, but also to take practical tactics and potential strategies back to our home institutions.

Our framing questions are:

- 1) what are the creative ways in which performance practitioner-researchers are making their work legible and visible within post-secondary research contexts?
- 2) how is the ethics review process impacting, or even shaping, the way that work is born out in practice?

We welcome creative, rich reflections on one or both of these questions from artists, scholars, and administrators familiar with institutional evaluation, tenure and promotion, and research ethics processes, from across the career spectrum.

Please send your name, institutional affiliation (if any), and a statement of interest sharing your perspective and what you might contribute to the panel (up to 250 words) to Natalie Álvarez (natalie.alvarez@torontomu.ca) and Kim Solga (ksolga@uwo.ca) by **April 20, 2023**.

d. Historiographing Hannah: A Critical Scrapbook Dedicated to Hannah Moscovitch

Convenors: Sasha Kovacs (University of Victoria) and Michelle MacArthur, University of Windsor

In-Person Roundtable (with hybrid option) at Dalhousie University (June 15-17, 2023)

“Scrapbooks are archives in and of their own right, whose flexibility invites anyone to engage in archiving [...]”

—Cherish Watton, “Suffrage Scrapbooks and Emotional Histories of Women’s Activism,” pp. 1029

One of Canada’s most prolific and celebrated contemporary playwrights, Hannah Moscovitch has seen her work produced domestically and internationally, on stage, screen, and radio, for nearly two decades. Moscovitch’s plays have been distinguished with high honours including the Governor General’s Award for English-language Drama and Yale University’s Donald

Windham-Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prize. Critics have bestowed her with titles such as “our most competent playwright, and I don’t mean that as faint praise” (Cushman), “a heavy hitter in Canadian theatre” (Murphy), and “one of contemporary theatre’s greatest writers of character” (Barker 424). And yet, scholarship within Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies has not kept up with Moscovitch’s abundant and acclaimed output, leaving scant critical discourse on her work (Barker, Demers, Jones, Zatzman).

As CATR 2023 gathers on Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the L’nu (Mi’kmaq) people, now also known as Halifax and Moscovitch’s adopted hometown, this roundtable invites participants to present short reflections on her body of work in order to seed further scholarship on one of Canada’s most-produced playwrights. Its overarching goal is to generate contributions to and interest in a forthcoming critical collection on Moscovitch’s plays edited by session co-conveners Sasha Kovacs and Michelle MacArthur.

Participants are invited to respond to some artifact, broadly conceived, of Moscovitch’s work as inspiration and anchor for their contribution—whether a specific scene, design rendering, song, program, photo, review, etc. These artifacts will be gathered and circulated in the lead-up to the roundtable, laying the foundation for a “critical scrapbook” that will also inform the structure of the edited collection in development. Understanding archiving as a site where “knowledge production begins” (Eicchorn 3) and scrapbooking as a “type of feminist archiving” (Watton 1030) that incorporates affective and creative materials and emphasizes collective knowledge-making, our approach uses the scrapbook as a method of feminist theatre historiography.

Participants will be invited to write a short, 10-minute paper that uses their artifact to illuminate some aspect of Moscovitch’s work. Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- representations of war
- representations of Jewish history and culture
- representations of motherhood
- representations of sexuality
- performing history
- performing auto/biography
- feminisms in/feminist readings of Moscovitch’s work
- common dramaturgical approaches (e.g. direct address, music)
- international production and reception of Moscovitch’s work
- artistic partnerships and collaborators (e.g. Maeve Beaty, Sarah Stanley)

The roundtable will take place during the in-person conference scheduled for June 15-17, 2023 at Dalhousie University and may include some (minor) advance preparation.

Please send a 250-word proposal describing your contribution to the roundtable, including your chosen artifact, and a brief bio to alexandrakovacs@uvic.ca by **Friday, April 14th, 2023**.

Works Cited:

- Barker, Roberta. "SONGS OF THE EXILES." *Dalhousie Review*, vol. 99, no. 3, 2019, pp. 421+.
- Cushman, Robert. "The Family Way; Hannah Moscovitch, Our Most Competent Playwright, Does Domestic Realism." *National Post* (Toronto), 2013.
- Demers, Patricia. *Women's Writing in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2019.
- Eichhorn, Kate. *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*. Temple University Press, 2013.
- Jones, Matt. "After Kandahar: Canadian Theatre's Engagement with the War in Afghanistan." *Canadian Theatre Review*, vol. 157, Jan. 2014, pp. 26–29. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3138/ctr.157.006>.
- Murphy, Aisling. "From Toronto Stages to the 'Interview with the Vampire' Writers' Room, Playwright Hannah Moscovitch Is Having a Moment." *The Toronto Star* (Online), 2022.
- Watton, Cherish. "Suffrage Scrapbooks and Emotional Histories of Women's Activism." *Women's History Review*, vol. 31, no. 6, Sept. 2022, pp. 1028–46. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2021.2012343>.
- Zatzman, Belarie. "Difficult Knowledge in Theatre for Young Audiences: Remembering and Representing the Holocaust." *Theatre and Learning*, edited by Art Babayants and Heather Fitzsimmons Frey, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 23–49.

II. Workshops:

a. Wading into Audience Research

Convenors: Centre for Spectatorship and Audience Research (University of Toronto)

In-person workshop (preceded by group attendance at a performance) at Dalhousie University (June 15-17, 2023)

Significant exploration of the choppy waters and distant shores of audience reception can be a fraught and overwhelming task. It's easy for the novice to lose their way among the policies and practicalities of spectatorship studies (Reason). In response, increasing numbers of audience researchers are venturing into these waters, hoping to broker equitable encounters between researchers, spectators, and theatre makers. This in-person workshop facilitated by the Centre for Spectatorship and Audience Research (Kelsey Blair, Kelsey Jacobson, Signy Lynch, Scott Mealey, and Jenny Salisbury) invites new and experienced audience researchers to join us on a Maritime spectatorship adventure with the goal of expanding our participants' methodological navigation.

Workshop participants will attend a theatre performance together during the conference. Then, using the polyvocal, mixed methods approach featured in our article from "From Site to Self" (Blair et al.) workshop participants will complete a survey and interview each other about the production at a post-performance session on audience research. The workshop will also

highlight critical and ethical approaches to audience research and engage participants in an evaluation of current methods.

To apply, please send a short (150-200 word statement) on your interest in and experience (if any) with audience research to centreforspectatorship@gmail.com by May 1, 2023. We welcome participants at all levels of their academic careers (from students to senior scholars), and with all levels of audience research experience. This workshop will undergo Research Ethics Board approval (and if you don't know what that means or entails, we'll talk about that, too).

Blair, K., Jacobson, K., Mealey, S., and J. Salisbury. "From Site to Self: Immersion, Audience Research, and Polyvocality." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2021), pp. 75-93.

Reason, Matthew. "Introduction to Part 2: Participations on Participation: Researching the "active" theatre audience." *Participations* vol. 12, no. 1 (2015): pp. 271-280.

b. The Floating Body: Butoh-inspired Movement as Decolonial Performance Pedagogy

Convenor: Carla Melo (University of Toronto Scarborough)

In-person workshop at Dalhousie University (June 15-17, 2023)

As a trope of emotion, water carries a lot of weight for the performer. Our blood gushes to our cheeks, our boiling anger pumps us to action. We avert their icy stares. We move through waves of anxiety.

Sometimes we freeze in fear, only to flow into the next moment or drown in tears, or worse, sink into despair! But that is not what this workshop is about. Water, like the body, remembers. But what the body contains, the water dissolves. It also washes through resistances and colonial notions about the performing body, the idea of an ideal body, or of a solid approach to emoting and performing. Images of water, in all its states, are central to some approaches to butoh-inspired training where the goal is not to become someone else, or your most charismatic persona, but rather, to become other. In my artistic and pedagogical praxis, butoh is both a language and a training for unlearning, unbecoming, and becoming other.

I invite you to join me. **You don't need to have any performance experience. All ages, bodies and abilities are welcomed.** Please wear loose, comfortable clothes. You can be barefoot or wear comfortable shoes, or socks. And don't forget to bring water!

Structure:

We will start with guided stretches for the first 10 minutes.

For the following 55 minutes we will move often slowly (and always safely) through a kind of guided movement meditation.

We will then take a 5-minute break and return to the room to debrief for the last 20 minutes.

Please send expressions of interest to Carla Melo at carla.melo@utoronto.ca by **Friday, April 21, 2023**.

III. Seminars

Burning it All Down: Advocating for Structural Change through Disability Justice

Organizers/moderators: Jenn Boulay (Concordia University) jenn.boulay@mail.concordia.ca, and Signy Lynch (University of Toronto Mississauga, Cahoots Theatre) signy.lynch@gmail.com,

Hybrid seminar (in-person and online participants welcome) at Dalhousie University (June 15-17, 2023)

This seminar builds off our seminar at last year's conference: "Performing Complaint: Working on theatre and performance institutions," which drew inspiration from Sara Ahmed's *Complaint!*, inviting participants from a wide range of backgrounds to share responses that engage with the theme of complaint as it relates to effecting change in Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies (DTPS) departments and institutions.

Our proposal for this year, "Burning it All Down" seeks to incorporate the principles of disability justice in order to think towards structural change. In an article for the journal *Knots*, Jenn Boulay observed of the conditions in DTPS departments in Canada, "Collectively, the student body of racialized students, disabled students, multiply marginalized students, and our allies do not feel that the academic environment is safe, inclusive, or accessible. Our efforts to voice our concerns have led us to work towards collective liberation, as the systemic issues that exist within both academic and non-academic arts institutions have yet to be fully recognized and fully acknowledged by those who have the power to implement change and eradicate systemic oppression" (73). These experiences are resonant with the experiences of many marginalized artists and arts workers in their engagements with theatre companies and other theatre institutions, and are further bolstered by the oppressive absence and dismissal of diverse representation in history (Boulay 74). These experiences are resonant with the experiences of many marginalized artists and arts workers in their engagements with theatre companies and other theatre institutions, and are further bolstered by the oppressive absence and dismissal of diverse representation in history (Boulay 74).

Our session this year picks up this observation and seeks to make space and offer a trusting space for participants (in particular students, grad students, recent post grads, and precariously employed artists/scholars/teachers) to reflect on and converse about this work towards collective liberation in DTPS departments and institutions. We aim to use the principles of disability justice, defined by the Sins Invalid collective, as "Intersectionality, Leadership of those Most Impacted, Anti-Capitalist Politics, Cross-Movement Solidarity, Recognizing Wholeness, Sustainability, Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity, Interdependence, Collective Access,

and Collective Liberation” (“10 Principles”) to cultivate a forum for critical reflection and knowledge-sharing towards both scholarly and practical ends.

We will conduct this session in a hybrid format, allowing for participants both online via Zoom, and in person in Halifax. The seminar session will be open to participants only due to the sensitive nature of some of the responses we anticipate. Seminar participants will share short written or pre-recorded video reflections prior to the conference session. Each reflection will focus on a structural issue that the individual would like to address with the group. During the three hour session, participants will each be given 5-10 minutes to summarize their contributions, followed by a moderated group discussion on ways to manage and respond to each, which may involve brainstorming possible courses of action and how they intersect with disability justice principles.

To apply for this seminar, please send a brief statement (written or video, no more than 250 words or two minutes) to organizers Jenn Boulay, and Signy Lynch. In your statement, please mention your institutional affiliations/position (for example, graduate student at X University, or administrator at Y theatre company) and explain how you would like to engage with the seminar theme, whether you will be participating in person in Halifax or online via Zoom, as well as any access needs you have. In your statement, as well as the session, we are asking participants to reflect on institutional mechanics, and not to single out individuals as subjects of critique.

Please send statements to Signy Lynch (signy.lynch@gmail.com) by **April 14, 2023**.

Works Cited

“10 Principles of Disability Justice” *Sins Invalid*, sinsinvalid.org/blog/10-principles-of-disability-justice

Ahmed, Sara. *Complaint!*. Duke UP, 2021.

Boulay, Jenn. “The World is On Fire: Disability Justice is my Strength.” *Knots: An Undergraduate Journal of Disability Studies*, vol. 6, no.1, 2021, pp. 68-75.

IV. Working Groups:

a. Somatic Engagement Working Group (Year 3)

Co-leaders : Christine (cricri) Bellerose & Ulla Neuerburg

We are accepting additional artist-researchers (français / English) to join our existing group. Please,

- 1) tell us about your interest in joining the Somatic Engagement Working Group,
- 2) provide a short bio and name your somatic movement practice(s) and lineage.
- 3) be prepared to define Somatics in your own terms and share your “go-to” scholarship.

We will hold pre-conference, informal meetings virtually at the end of April and May.

A WORKING DEFINITION OF THE SCHOLARLY FIELD OF SOMATICS

We understand Somatics to go beyond the study of human embodiment, and into the lesser travelled “five pathways undertaken by somatic practitioners: social, ecological, spiritual, health and well-being and education” (Fortin 2017). Somatics is both an emerging and an ancient praxis (Eddy 2016; Fraleigh 2015). The 19th century field’s pioneers developed body-mind sensory motor therapies and pedagogies long before the term Somatics became the overall umbrella naming these related theories, practices, and studies. Especially popular in Dance and Theatre worlds from which emerged several associated dance and acting techniques, in recent years, Somatics has integrated and contributed to Feminist, Environmental, and Disability Studies (Kuppers 2011, 2022). Somatics, at present, is associated with a sensory, sentient body-based research methodology resisting the neoliberal academic’s definition of what constitute excellent research, and overlaps with land-based and sociocultural knowledge approaches, sensuous ethnography, qualitative inquiry, performativity, as well as being grounded in a thinking-in-motion advocacy of the preverbal living body’s experience (Bardet et al 2018; Fernandes 2020; Fraleigh 2019; Johnson 2018; Sheets-Johnstone 2011). To these overlapping and layered functional, experiential, and interconnected modalities, Somatics furthermore operates through shared values of mutuality, continuity across differences, and care/healing.

Please send your application [here](#).

b. Digital Performance Working Group (Year 2)

Co-leaders: Shana MacDonald (University of Waterloo) and Kimberley McLeod

Understandings of digital performance have radically shifted in the past 18 months as theatre and performance makers have moved in-progress and previous work into online spaces or created new pieces that can be presented via digital means to distanced audiences. While many Canadian artists were already exploring digital spaces and using digital tools in their work, there has been a marked increase in digital performance nationally with the creation of numerous podplays, audio walks and augmented reality experiences. At the same time, there has been an upsurge in online organizing and digital activism in 2020-21. This new working group aims to take advantage of the current moment to probe the relationship between theatre, performance and the digital. We will consider the possibilities that emerge when performance engages with digital tools and spaces, but also the challenges and limitations that occur, particularly in light of biases built into programming, increases in dataveillance, the corporate platformization of digital public spaces, and the abundance of misinformation that spreads through digital means.

We are seeking members to join the second year of this three-year working group. At the 2023 CATR conference, we will have a synchronous session open to the public during the online portion of the conference (June 10-12, 2023). Working group participants will be invited to present either a short digital performance experiment or short provocation on a topic of their

choosing (5 minutes max). Each presenter will ask a series of questions for the group to consider in relation to their performance or provocation.

Those interested in joining the Digital Performance Working Group should email a current CV and short statement of interest (250 words max) to shana.macdonald@uwaterloo.ca and kimberley.mcleod@uoguelph.ca by April 14, 2023.