Spectacular Labor

Wednesday, August 10th
Annie May Swift Hall, Room 103
Northwestern University
1920 Campus Dr., Evanston, IL

Thursday, August 11th
Palmer House Hilton, Clark 7
Chicago, IL

Curated by Steve Luber and Jasmine Mahmoud
Since its inception over a decade ago, the Performance Studies Focus Group (PSFG) has helped to expand the scope of the ATHE conference as a whole. By drawing upon interdisciplinary methods, scholars, and ideas, PSFG has consistently worked to challenge and critique the boundaries of performance itself and performance-based inquiry. To that end, PSFG has consistently sponsored a wide variety of multidisciplinary panels, fostering scholarship and discussion about the keywords, models of cultural efficacy, and research methodologies defining the fields of “theatre” and “performance.” Since 2003, PSFG has hosted annual pre-conferences exploring a vibrant series of topics. Starting with the foundational question, “What is performance studies?”, pre-conference themes have gone on to include: pedagogy, local and national identities, history, politics and power, spirituality, and play.

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2015 – 2016

Focus Group Representative: Melissa Wansin Wong
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2016 Pre-Conference Organizers
Jasmine Mahmoud and Stephen Luber
Program Design: Raimondo Genna

If you would like to learn more about PSFG, please attend our annual membership meeting on Thursday, August 11th, from 1:30 to 3:00pm in room Clark 7

Slavoj Žižek calls Jeremy Glick’s Black Radical Tragic “a book we were all waiting for without knowing it.”

“(Glick) combines here a sober and ruthless insight into the necessary tragic twists of the revolutionary process with the unconditional fidelity to this process. He stands as far as possible from the standard ‘anti-totalitarian’ claim that, since every revolutionary process is destined to degenerate, it’s better to abstain from it. This readiness to take the risk and engage in the battle, although we know that we will probably be sacrificed in the course of the struggle, is the most precious insight for us who live in new dark times.”

— Slavoj Žižek, in the L.A. Review of Books

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John H. White took the photograph. A black photographer gifted in capturing the profound-quotidian, White worked for the Chicago Sun-Times beginning in 1978, winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1982. In 2013, his photographs gained renewed notoriety as part of “Searching for the Seventies: The Documerica Photography Project,” the National Archives exhibition. Also in 2013, the Chicago Sun-Times—his long-time employer—laid off its entire photo staff. Michelle Agins of The New York Times wrote: “While everybody else was stunned and upset that The Chicago Sun-Times had fired its entire photography staff, I couldn’t stop thinking of one man. They did that to John White? … That’s like the Bulls getting rid of Michael Jordan.” After the mass layoff, the Sun-Times trained journalists to take photographs on iPhones, a move indicative of worsening work conditions under neoliberalism.

The worlds of the photograph and the photographer intimately connect to the themes of SPECTACULAR LABOR, the 2016 Performance Studies Focus Group Pre-Conference.

Defined, labor means physical work and also the process of childbirth. In certain ways, labor has never been more visible thanks to social media campaigns (e.g. #raisethewage, #fightfor15), election-year rhetoric, and escalating debates on global trade. Labor as reproduction has also sustained presence with the criminalization of miscarriage, debates on natural childbirth, and wage theft for working mothers. In other ways, however, we have never been more removed from the processes, places, and people who labor. The experience economy has engendered what Naomi Klein called “a divestment of the world of things,” with economic trends of the millenial generation (who use Uber, Instacart, and Tinder) forming a feedback loop of encouragement. The products of labor—with all the politics, turmoil, and consequences of that labor—arrive at our doors (guaranteed in 2 days, or even sometimes 2 hours), packaged, boxed, and sanitized as though never touched by human hands (and, in certain cases, never actually touched by human hands).

But labor also includes invaluable ideas and practices that function outside conventional arenas of material goods. #blacklivesmatter has focused attention on structures of anti-black violence in black life. Critical theory and performance on race, gender and sexuality, nation, and class, have all taken up labor and the spectacle thereof to work through challenges of hegemonic forces and the re-making of the world as a form of resistance and action.

The spectacle of labor, in other words, begs analysis attuned to performance. Performance emphasizes process, not product, and challenges the neoliberalism of material exchange; performance is an industry with economic, political, and cultural effects on a globalizing market; performance is rehearsal for a world that exists alongside that outside performance, with utopian and dystopian visions that help to guide us toward change. SPECTACULAR LABOR, this pre-conference, positions performance in these ways, from our keynote speaker, Joshua Chambers-Letson, and his talk “Nina Simone and the Work of Minoritarian Performance,” to papers and performances about the experience economy, affective labor, the circus, citizenship and the nation-state, minoritarian aesthetics, and women’s labor. Our very co-presence here is a spectacle of intellectual, artistic, pedagogical, and social labor. We hope this labor can continue the vital work of refashioning the world much like John H. White’s photography, by attuning to spectacle of the profound-everyday.
**Pre-Conference Schedule**

(find an abstract of each presentation at https://spectacularlabor.wordpress.com/schedule/)

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10**

Location: Annie May Swift Hall, Room 103 (Alvina Krause Studio)  
Northwestern University, 1920 Campus Drive, Evanston, IL

**SELF-GUIDED TOUR TO EVANSTON (8:20AM – 9:30AM)**

Meet at 8:20am in the lobby of the Palmer House Hilton and then travel to Evanston, IL, via the CTA, accompanied by a self-guided tour compiled by Kelly Chung, Colleen Kim Danilier, and Lakshmi Padmanabhan. More information at spectacularlabor.wordpress.com

**BREAKFAST & REGISTRATION (9:00 – 9:45AM)**

**WELCOME (9:45 – 9:55AM)**

Steve Luber, University of New Haven & Jasmine Mahmoud, Washington University in St. Louis — Pre-Conference Curators


Moderator: Patrick McKelvey, Florida State University – PSFG Focus Group Representative Elect  
Hilary Cooperman, Rollins College  
“‘They’re Stealing our Heritage’ Capitalism, Discourse and Dispossession”  
Patricia Nguyen, Northwestern University  

**CARNIVALESQUE ECONOMIES (11:00AM – 12:10PM)**

Moderator: Beth Hoffman – PSFG Conference Planner  
Andrea Dudziak, University of Denver  
“I do Circus; The Emergence of Circus Arts as a Hobby”  
Roy Gomez Cruz, Northwestern University  
“Transnational Acrobatics and Meanings of Labor in Contemporary Circus Capitals in North America”  
Amy Meyer, Tufts University  
“Acrobatic Activism: Laboring Bodies as Feminist Performance in the Contemporary Circus”

**LUNCH (12:10 – 1:10PM)**

**THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY (1:20 – 2:30PM)**

Moderator: Eero Laine, University at Buffalo, State University of New York – PSFG Member-At-Large  
Li Cornfeld, McGill University  
“‘It Works Like Magic’: Theatrical Labor and the Product Launch”  
Hye Kyoung Kwon, UCLA  
“The Affective Labor of South Korean Hallyu Stars: Intimacy as Capital”  
Chloe Rae Edmonson, CUNY  
“Blood, Sweat, and Cocktails: Immersive Marketing and the Experience Economy in Contemporary New York City”

**THE BODY ON DISPLAY (2:40-3:50PM)**

Moderator: Colleen Kim Danilier, Brown University – PSFG Member-At-Large  
Benjamin Gillepsie, CUNY  
“Performing Age Labor: Spectating Advanced Age in Florian Zeller’s The Father”  
Olive McKeon, UCLA  
“Dance, Labor-Power, and the Value-Form: the dancer as worker”  
Kris Salata, Florida State University  
“Work as Homecoming: The Legacy of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards”
This two-year master's program offers students a broad-based approach to the study of performance, expanding a traditional focus on the aesthetic practices of theater and dance to include cultural performances such as gender performativity, Civil Rights activism, and street begging in early modern Europe.

Under the broad umbrella of performance, students are invited to explore the mutual engagement of aesthetic and cultural performance practices across history, around the globe, and between disciplines, drawing on a variety of theoretical approaches to illuminate the complex meanings generated by and through performance.

For more information, visit pad.artsci.wustl.edu/graduate.

Please recommend our program to your most promising students!

Application deadline is January 15th

Patricia Nguyen is a Ph.D. candidate in Performance Studies at Northwestern University. Her research and performance work examines critical refugee studies, political economy, forced migration, cultural memory, oral histories, and nation building in the United States and Vietnam. Patricia has over 10 years experience working in arts education, community development, and human rights in the United States, Brazil, Philippines, and Vietnam. She has facilitated trainings and workshops with The Fulbright Program, American Center at the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam, Jane Addams Hull House, Christina Noble Foundation, Social Workers Association in Vietnam, Vietnamese American Young Leadership Association in New Orleans (VAYLA-NO), and Asian Human Services on issues ranging from forced migration, mental health, youth empowerment, and language access. As a performance artist, she has performed at the Nha San Collective in Vietnam, the Mission Cultural Center in San Francisco, Jane Addams Hull House, Oberlin College, Northwestern University, University of Massachusetts Boston, and Prague Quadrennial. Patricia is currently a Paal and Daisy Soros Fellow for New Americans.

Louise Owen works as a Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research examines contemporary theatre and performance in terms of economic change and modes of governance. Her writing has been published in Performance Research, frakkeji, Contemporary Theatre Review, and TDR. Her monograph, Agents of the Future: Theatre, Performance and Neoliberalization in Britain, is under contract with Northwestern University Press. She is currently working on Theatre & Money for Palgrave Macmillan’s Theatred series. She co-convenes the London Theatre Seminar and is co-director of the Birkbeck Centre for Contemporary Theatre.

Kris Salata is an artist-scholar and Associate Professor of Performance in the School of Theatre at Florida State University, where he teaches performance, directing, devised theatre, and critical theory courses in the BA, MA, MFA, and PhD programs. Born in Poland, where he became an award-winning writer, performer, and director, he immigrated to the US as a political refugee in 1980s. He earned his PhD in Drama and Humanities at Stanford University. He focuses his research on avant-garde theatre, and on phenomenological, ontological, and epistemological aspects of theatre practice with emphasis on Performance as Research. For the last two decades he has closely studied the legacy of the Polish-born director and theorist, Jerzy Grotowski. He has published articles and book chapters on Grotowski, Stanislavsky, Kantor, collective creation, and collaboration, and guest-edited a special issue of TDR dedicated to Grotowski. In his book, The Unwritten Grotowski: Theory and Practice of the Encounter (Routledge, 2013), he lays out foundations for interdisciplinary studies of the encounter.

Elizabeth Son is an assistant professor in the Department of Theatre at Northwestern University, with courtesy appointments in the American Studies Program, Asian American Studies Program, and the Department of Performance Studies. Her current research focuses on the relationship between performance and politics in a transnational Asian American context. In her book manuscript, Embodied reckonings: comfort women, performances, and transpacific redress, under contract with the University of Michigan Press, she explores the political and cultural significance of performances in South Korea, Japan, and the United States as a way to understand the history of Japanese military sexual slavery. She looks specifically at the work of Korean and Korean diasporic subjects in protests, tribunals, theatre, and memorial building as sites for reimagining what constitutes redress. Her articles have appeared in Asian Theatre Journal (forthcoming), Theatre Survey, Theater, and e-misférica.
Katheryn Bilbo is Artistic Director and Assistant Professor of Theatre/Performance at Northwest Missouri State University, teaching performance courses such as Advanced Acting, Voice and Movement for the Stage, and Periods and Styles; as well as Theatre History courses and Playwriting. She holds an MFA in Performance from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has been a member of Actors’ Equity Association for nearly 20 years. She taught performance at Lon Morris College in Jacksonville, Texas and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as in children's theatres in the South and Midwest. Her most recent productions include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Reckless*, and *Legally Blonde – The Musical*. Research interests include gender and racial disparity in the theatre, traditional Japanese theatre forms, and the psychology of university actors.

Beth Capper is a doctoral candidate in modern culture and media at Brown University, where she is writing a dissertation on inoperativity, reproductive labor, and the politics of feminist community in feminist performance and media from the 1970s to the present. Her writing has been published in *Art Journal* and *Media Fields*. She is the co-organizer of the Seizing the Means of Reproduction Conference (2016), the Feminist & Women’s Media Festival (2014), and the Providence-based experimental media series Magic Lantern Cinema (ongoing). Beth is also part of a collaborative effort to build a digital archive of materials from the Wages for Housework movement. She is currently a graduate student fellow in the Pembroke Seminar for Teaching and Research on Women at Brown University and a research assistant for *TDR: The Drama Review*.

Michelle Liu Carriger is Assistant Professor of Critical Studies at the School of Theater, Film and Television at University of California, Los Angeles.

Joshua Chambers-Letson is Assistant Professor of Performance Studies at Northwestern University where he also holds an appointment in the Program in Asian American Studies and Theater. He is the author of *A Race So Different: Law and Performance in Asian America* (NYU Press, 2013), winner of the 2014 Outstanding Book Award from the Association of Theater in Higher Education (ATHE), and is currently working on a book titled *On the Work of Minoritarian Performance*. Other publications can be found in journals that include *Social Text*, *Political Theory*, *Criticism Journal*, *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *MELUS*, and *women & performance*. Along with Ann Pellegrini and Tavia Nyong'o he is a series co-editor of the Sexual Cultures series at NYU Press.

Hilary Cooperman is a Visiting Artist-in-Residence/Lecturer in the theater and dance department of Rollins College in Florida. She earned her doctorate in Performance Studies at Northwestern University and her master’s degree in Middle East Studies in Israel. She is both a researcher and performer using arts-based approaches to look primarily at the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. She teaches courses in peacebuilding through theater and Middle East performance and culture. She is currently working on a book project that uses drama-based research to examine Palestinians’ lives under occupation in the West Bank.

Li Cornfeld is a PhD candidate at McGill University in Communication Studies. She holds an MA in Performance Studies from NYU. Her dissertation, *Stages of Technology: Theatricality and Mediation in the Circuits of Production*, investigates the labor of staging theatrical spectacles through which commercial technologies are introduced at industrial sites.

Todd Coulter is Assistant Professor of Theater and Dance at Colby College.

Colleen Kim Daniher is a Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University. She received her Ph.D. in Performance Studies from Northwestern University. Her teaching and research interests include Asian diasporic theatre and performance in the Americas, comparative race studies, critical mixed race studies, decolonial theory, and visual cultural studies. She is currently preparing a book manuscript that develops a history and theory of “the racial ambiguity act,” a form of significant cultural, performative, and interracial labor in the long durée of white settler colonialism in Canada and U.S.-America. She is also working on a second project that investigates the contributions of contemporary Asian/American art and performance in reconfiguring notions of racial visibility in the era of neoliberal colorblindness and multicultural recognition. Her research has been supported by fellowships from the American Society for Theatre Research and the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada, and her writing has appeared in *e-misférica* and *Theatre Journal*. She is a member-at-large for the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and has performed on and around a variety of stages as an actor, vocalist, and dramaturge.
Andi Dudziak has her Masters of Fine Arts in Theatre: Contemporary Performance from Naropa University and her Masters of Arts in Theatre Studies from Florida State University and is currently pursuing a graduate certificate in Arts Development and Program-Hour Yoga teacher. She is also a certified Yoga teacher. Three years ago, after a long fascination with the circus from afar, Andi took her first aerial silks class at Frequent Flyers in Boulder, CO and fell in love with flying. She has since continued her love of circus with experiences in flying trapeze, static trapeze, aerial rope, lyra, stilts, and juggling. Wire walking will be her next adventure. Artistically, Andi looks for creative new ways to combine her love of circus with the storytelling of theatre.

Chlöe Rae Edmonson is PhD candidate in Theatre at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Her dissertation explores the interpretation and critique of late style in work by artists of advanced age, considering how preconceived notions of embodiment, temporality, and the life cycle are complicated through contemporary performance practices. Benjamin teaches courses in theatre history, performance studies, and speech communication and he holds a writing fellowship at Lehman College. He is Assistant Editor of P.A.I.A: A Journal of Performance and Art and his articles and reviews have appeared in Theatre Journal, Theatre Survey, Theatre Research in Canada, and Canadian Theatre Review. He has also contributed articles to a number of anthologies and presented papers at conferences across the U.S. and Canada.

Roy Gomez Cruz is a PhD candidate in Performance Studies at Northwestern University and holds a Master in Communication of Science and Culture. His research examines the relationship between labor and transnational communities within contemporary circus industries in North America, exploiting the transformative potential of acrobatics and circus performance to challenge gender binaries, national identifications and neoliberalism.

Beth Hoffmann is an independent scholar working in the Washington, D.C. region. She received her PhD in 2008 from the University of California, Berkeley, and has been teaching for the past eight years in the English Department at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. Her first book manuscript, Proper Theatre: The Politics of Form in Contemporary British Performance is forthcoming from Routledge in 2017. She is now working on her second book project, tentatively titled Postdramatic Experience: Performance, Narrative, Authenticity. Hoffmann has published book chapters, articles and reviews in venues including Theatre Journal, Performance Research, and Contemporary Theatre Review.

Margarita Kompelmakher is a PhD candidate in the Theater and Dance Department at the University of Minnesota where she is currently completing her dissertation titled Untimely Universals: Performing Human Rights in Post-Soviet Belarusian Theater. Her research expertise is in post-Soviet documentary theater practice and its global circulation under the pressures of human rights discourse and aesthetics. She also writes about immigrant performance and the politics of multiculturalism in the US and has published an essay on this subject titled “Dancing Bright: Identify Politics and the Performance of ex-Soviet Alliances in the Twin Cities” in the anthology Captured By The City: New Perspectives in Urban Culture Studies.

Hye Kyoung Kwon is a PhD candidate in Theater and Performance Studies in the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television. She completed her B.A and M.A in Soegang University, Seoul, South Korea. She studied contemporary South Korean political theater and feminist theater during her M.A program, and her thesis focused on the ways in which textual anxiety from national censorship and governmental surveillance manifest in South Korean theater of the 1970s. Her recent research interest is how the surface of Korean-ness has been shaped in the context of globalization — including the transnational mobility of South Korean visual media, multi-cultural performances, and Korean/American theaters.

Kate Elswit is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of New Haven. Her book project is entitled Last Gazp: The Ends of Multimedia Performance.

Jasmine Mahmoud is the Postdoctoral Fellow in Inequality and Identity in the Program in American Culture Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. Her work examines how aesthetic and geographic experiences entangle, with an attention to how racial geographies, neoliberal policy, and urban displacement interact with contemporary performance practices such as experimental theater, social practice work, and performance art. She has presented work at Northwestern University, MA in Arts Politics from Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, and BA in Government from Harvard University.

Patrick McKelvey is a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is Assistant Editor of TDR: The Drama Review along with a portfolio in Women's and Gender Studies from the University of Texas at Austin where he also regularly taught. At NYU, James edits for Performance Research in Canada, and Canadian Theatre Review. He has also contributed articles to a number of anthologies and presented papers at conferences across the U.S. and Canada.

Rae Langes is Chicago-based performance artist currently pursuing a PhD in Performance Studies at Northwestern University. Through rhizidal stories about coming of age as an androgynous dyke during the first Bush Administration, living as a transient and crossing state and national borders with moneylenders of queer's just before and following 9/11, Rae's performances question popular understandings of what it means to be human. If one is positioned as sub/human, or even monstrous according to one's perceived gender, sexuality, race, or nationality, how does that affect one's belonging in a particular community or society? Given its volatile history, is “humanity” a term we should continue to revise and fight for?

William W. Lewis is third year doctoral student in Theatre and Performance at the University of Colorado Boulder. His dissertation project uses critical posthumanism as a lens to frame the impact of media and communication technologies on 21st century spectatorship. He researches performance companies using alternative, postdramatic and devised forms of storytelling that implement site specificity, gaming, digital and locative media. Will is also a practicing director, designer and performance maker. His most recent project was supported by a John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Media Innovation Grant. He is also the founding managing editor of the new e-journal Performing the Postdramatic published by the University of Colorado and Digital Commons.

Lindsay Adamson Livingston is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre and Media Arts at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Her work focuses on performance and material culture at the intersections of race, space, and memory. She is completing a book project on the gun as a performing object entitled Twisted/Ordinary Crimes: The Place and Performance of Gun Violence in the United States.

Steve Luber is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of New Haven. His book project is entitled Last Gazp: The Ends of Multimedia Performance.

Eero Laine is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York.

Amy Meyer is a PhD Candidate in Drama at Tufts University. She received BAs in Theatre and English from Connecticut College and an MA in Drama from Tufts. Her research combines dance and movement studies with theatre studies to analyze performance and culture. Her current project examines the history of acrobatics in the modern circus to illuminate the ways in which bodies tell stories, paying particular attention to issues of gender and sexuality. She has presented work for the American Theatre Research, the American Theatre and Drama Society, the Graduate Consortium in Women’s Studies, and the Mid-America Theatre Conference. Amy is also an aspiring acrobat and a member of the Boston-based physical theatre troupe Imaginary Beasts.

James McMaster is a PhD student in Performance Studies at NYU where his work focuses on queer and cis Asian Theatre with focuses in Acting and Performance Studies from Muhlenberg College and his MA in Performance and Practice along with a portfolio in Women’s and Gender Studies from the University of Texas at Austin where he also regularly taught. At NYU, James edits for TDR and is part of the editorial collective for Women and Performance. Also a poet and devised theatre maker, he has performed and presented work in Texas and across the northern United States.

Kate Elswit is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of New Haven. Her book project is entitled Last Gazp: The Ends of Multimedia Performance.

Olive McKeon is a dancer and researcher from Northern California. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles, writing a dissertation on historical materialism, Marxist political economy, and modern/postmodern dance history in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is a member of a feminist cusuatorial collective called SAITA that puts together a monthly series of experimental dance in Oakland.

Eero Laine is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Theatre in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York.