

**Call for Papers: *Theory and Criticism Focus Group* of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), 2019 Conference**  
Orlando, Florida August 7-11, 2019

**Please send questions to Theory and Criticism Conference Planner:  
Daniel Ciba (danciba@hotmail.com)**

**1) “Unities of Action”—An Interactive Roundtable Event**

In response to the 2019 ATHE conference theme, “Scene Changes: Performing, Teaching, and Working through the Transitions,” the Theory and Criticism Focus Group will center our conversations around scholarly and practical explorations and mutations of “the unities.” How might reconceiving the concept of unity impact our roles as theorists, practitioners, and educators?

Citing Aristotle, neoclassicists such as Castelvetro and d’Aubignac framed the three unities—of time, place, and action—as mandatory rules that created a standard for what makes a good play. Playwrights, from various cultures and periods, either accept or reject the unities as the first step in the process of constructing a play. The decision to follow or ignore the unities shapes decisions made by directors, designers, and actors as well as the responses of audiences, critics, and scholars. Building on the idea of scene changes, ATHE’s 2019 Orlando conference provides our community of theorists, artists, and teachers an opportunity to question, reconsider, and stretch the unities by thinking broadly about the concept of unity as a guiding principle in our research, our performance spaces, and our classrooms. Aren’t Orlando’s various amusement parks attempts to create a unified experience of commercialized nostalgia?

What are the ways in which practitioners and scholars interpret and perhaps even intervene with the unities? What is the value of teaching the unities as a foundational component of any course? Why do playwrights ranging from Shakespeare to Brecht to Naomi Iizuka reject some unities while embracing others? What kind of national imaginaries do scholars construct around the unities? What kind of unities are the most pressing for contemporary practice? How might the concept of unity further silence already marginalized voices? From this exploration of the unities, can we transition from unity to action?

**The Theory and Criticism Focus Group seeks position papers from theatre artists, educators, scholars, activists, philosophers, and critics interested in examining our 2019 Roundtable Series theme, “Unities of Action.”**

The roundtables eschew formal paper presentations in favor of short position papers and provocations designed to encourage interactive critical conversations among panelists and audience members. Building on our previous roundtable series, we strive to include a diverse range of participants from graduate students and emerging scholars, to professional critics, artists, educators, and senior scholars.

Position papers can take the form of a **short essay, a manifesto, an outreach exercise, a critical review, a theoretical musing, a research report, a creative project, an interview, or an embodied performance practice**. Questions include, but are not limited to:

- **Theory:** What is the mythology behind the unities? How are the unities still a valuable framework for certain types of performances? What might we replace the unities with and why? What is the relationship between unity and universality? How does the concept of unity change over time and place both inside and outside of theatrical contexts? What is the role of critics to evaluate a performance based on its adherence to certain unities?
- **Practice:** How do playwrights use the unities? How does this affect directors, designers, actors, and audiences? What is the value of creating a unified production? What are reasons that theatrical practitioners reject the unities? What does it mean to be forced to perform disunity? How can theatrical or performative disruptions of the unities manifest both inside and outside of traditional theatre spaces? What kinds of unities do theatrical practitioners explore in rehearsals and performances? What is the value of the unities on stage if they are not maintained in the real world?
- **Pedagogy:** What is the value of teaching the unities? What is their place in our curriculum? Is there a unity in the creation of syllabus and/or the composition of each individual lesson plan? How can intentional disruptions of the unities be employed as a pedagogical strategy? What kinds of unities might we learn from our students? What is the relationship between unity and diversity?

The Theory and Criticism Focus Group will accept individual, 250-word position paper abstracts for the “Unities of Action” Roundtable Series until **Monday, October 15, 2018**. **Submissions should include:**

- 1) Abstract (250 words or less)
- 2) Title
- 3) Contact information (name, institutional affiliation, email address, and phone number)
- 4) a brief bio of 50 words or less
- 5) any specific A/V requirements (only if absolutely necessary)

T&C will inform participants of their acceptance by Friday, October 26 and the Theory and Criticism Focus Group will oversee the submission of the Roundtable Series panels through ATHE’s online proposal process. Send your position paper abstracts to the Theory and Criticism Focus Group conference planner **Daniel Ciba at [danciba@hotmail.com](mailto:danciba@hotmail.com)**.

## **2) Call for Complete Session Proposals, Sponsored by the Theory and Criticism Focus Group**

We also seek complete session proposals for the 2019 conference that include a broad range of theoretical/critical interrogations and applications based on the theme of “Scene Changes: Performing, Teaching, and Working through the Transitions.” We encourage multidisciplinary dialogues across the fields of performance scholarship and praxis. We also seek participants from a variety of focus group affiliations.

The Theory and Criticism Focus Group supports broad definitions of criticism and performance, and therefore encourages a wide range of examples and topics. Feel free to explore both historical and contemporary critics and theorists, in popular culture, academic scholarship, and performance praxis. Panel proposals that engage scholarly conversation in creative ways are highly encouraged.

Please Note:

- Single Focus Group Sessions can address questions to the conference planner (danciba@hotmail.com) before submitting their proposal.
- Multidisciplinary proposals must be authorized by TWO sponsoring ATHE focus groups. Email and get authorization from each focus group’s conference planner before submitting.
- You can only participate in 2 sessions.
- You can only choose **1 Free A/V aid:** audio or CD player OR flip chart OR LCD projector.
- If you need additional A/V, you or the focus group will need to apply for a conference grant. Let your conference planner know.
- For more detailed information see: [http://www.athe.org/page/18\\_home](http://www.athe.org/page/18_home).

Complete session proposals (*separate from the Roundtable Series*) should be submitted directly to the ATHE website (www.athe.org). You must have the names for all participants ready for the proposal. The website includes submission information and forms. The session proposal deadline is **November 1, 2018**.

NOTES:

If you have questions about the ATHE panel proposal submission process, feel free to email Daniel Ciba at danciba@hotmail.com.

Single paper submissions (outside of our annual roundtable series or a completed session proposal) looking for a session home may contact Daniel Ciba at danciba@hotmail.com.

Individuals do not need to be a member of the Theory and Criticism Focus Group or ATHE to submit single presentations or panels. However, if chosen and scheduled, participants must become members of ATHE by the time of the conference.