Call for Papers: PSFG/ATHE 2022 Emerging Scholars Panel Competition

The Performance Studies Focus Group (PSFG) of the Association of Theater in Higher Education (ATHE) conference invites submissions of papers for its Emerging Scholars Panel. The theme of this year’s conference, which will take place in Detroit, MI from July 28-31 (2022) is "Rehearsing the Possible: Practicing Reparative Creativity."

The PSFG Emerging Scholars Panel is an opportunity for researchers to present their work at a major international conference at the outset of their career. All graduate students and scholars who have not yet presented at ATHE are eligible to apply. Selected emerging scholars are paired with a mentor from the field of Performance Studies who will offer critical feedback on papers in preparation for the conference.

Located at the boundaries and intersections of scholarly and artistic practice, Performance Studies theorizes and analyzes embodied practices and events, and explores the ways in which performance creates meaning and shapes social life. This year’s PSFG will develop a conversation on the theme of “Rehearsing the Possible: Practicing Reparative Creativity.” Two years into a worldwide pandemic and continued political upheaval, the “possible” and the “reparative” represent hope and justice, but also loss and resentment. Revisiting the site of an imagined in-person ATHE 2019 in Detroit, the “Renaissance City,” and ATHE’s something-of-a-return are indicative of these myriad contradictions. What possibilities arise from framing reparation as “a critical, political and artistic practice” (Dorinne Kondo)? How might the field of Performance Studies facilitate reparation, and what obstacles and limitations do we face in the process? What assumptions underlie our call for reparative creativity? From whom does this call demand labor and whose futures are embodied in performances of the possible?

In light of this year’s theme, some questions we will consider include:

- How do notions of utopia, such as Jill Dolan’s “utopian performatives,” work alongside, against, or within existing structures and institutions? How might they liberate? How might they constrain or erase?
- In Feminist, Queer, Crip, Alison Kafer challenges futures that present an idealized life devoid of disability. How might we complicate rehearsals of the possible that could also be (un)intentionally eugenicist?
- How does the call for reparation evoke the relationships we enact to land? How might we think with and through performance and land restoration: what gestures, acts and words are restorative? How do calls for Indigenous stewardship intersect with the discourse performativity?
- What conversations might the city of Detroit inspire when thinking about Black futurity and rehearsing the possible? How might we return to and build on the conversations initiated at the 2020 PSFG Post-Con “Performing Black Futures,” which asked: How might performance frame, archive, and expand notions of Black aesthetics and geographies, Black feminist and queer futures, and Afrofuturism?
● How might performance frameworks such as twice-behaved behavior address and enact radical institutional change, and how might they reify said institutions? What are other discursive strategies within Performance Studies that highlight potentiality?
● How have COVID-provoked adaptations shown us new possibilities or changed our understanding of mediation? What impact has the use of livestreams, recordings, social media, websites, spreadsheets, and phones had on contemporary performance practices? Likewise, how has our extended engagement with virtual media shaped our view of live, in-person theater? Are we on the verge of a “return to normal” or has “normal” permanently shifted?

Submissions to the PSFG Emerging Scholars panel may engage these questions generated by the conference theme or may address issues raised by Performance Studies more broadly. Papers across performance modes and historical periods are welcome. Topics may include:

• Contested boundaries between performance, theater, and other art forms/disciplines
• Performance as a modality of (historical) knowledge
• Historiographical approaches to performance
• Negotiating and building identity through performance
• Situating performance in terms of race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and disability
• The role of performance in shifting configurations of power and resistance
• Performative strategies of the avant-garde
• Conflict, confrontation, and dissensus in the performance encounter
• Intersections of performance and philosophy
• Performance within postcolonial and neocolonial contexts
• Performativity and theatricality
• Embodiment and technological culture

Papers should be formatted using MLA or author-date Chicago style and adhere to a strict 2000-3000 word limit (including notes). The deadline for submission is Tuesday March 1, 2022. Please send completed papers (in Microsoft Word format) without your name anywhere in the text, along with a current CV to PSFG Graduate Representative Alison Mahoney at amm540@pitt.edu. Results will be announced in early April 2022.

Winners will be responsible for registering to ATHE’s membership and conference on their own starting in May, and we will provide guidance in this process, as needed.