

**A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:
DELINEATING THE FIELD**

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This is the first issue of *Performance and Spirituality*, the annual peer-reviewed journal of the Institute for the Study of Performance and Spirituality (ISPS). *Performance and Spirituality* is published to further the ISPS mission to foster research into interactions between theatre, performance, media, and alternative forms of religion and spirituality. *Performance and Spirituality* uses the term “alternative” to refer to spiritual and/or religious practices, beliefs, organizations, philosophies, etc. that are perceived by many members of the cultures in which they arise as somehow outside of the realm of conventional religion and/or spirituality. Any religious or spiritual tradition, be it long-established or emergent, might be considered alternative; the perception of “alternative-ness” arises out of the cultural context in which the tradition in question exists.

Adherents of alternative religious and spiritual traditions sometimes create modes of expression that perform a variety of functions, such as lending clarity, immediacy, a social aspect, an artistic dimension, and a sense of history to a specific belief system. Sometimes these modes of expression involve performance and media, and in the last one hundred years many new works of performance- and media-based art have promoted alternative religious and spiritual agendas. At the same time, many artists who do not claim religious or spiritual affiliation have drawn from the symbolism, philosophy, and practices of alternative religious and spiritual traditions to create new works. This journal will explore both affiliated and non-affiliated works.

The field of study with which *Performance and Spirituality* concerned is broad and deep, and to consider it with any depth will require articles written from diverse

cultural and disciplinary perspectives. This first issue is entitled “Delineating the Field,” not because the editorial board of *Performance and Spirituality* believes that the field has been successfully delineated with this issue, but to acknowledge the beginning of an ongoing project of collecting well-researched articles that contribute to an ever-deepening understanding of the relationship between performance, media, and alternative religion and spirituality. The three authors whose work appears in this issue—Victoria Nelson, R. Andrew White, and Jason Winslade—have already produced work that has contributed to a more profound comprehension of this relationship, and so it is fitting that they are the contributing authors to the first issue of *Performance and Spirituality*.