

**A Point of Transition:
Broadened Research and New Directions in *Performance and Spirituality***

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This issue marks a point of transition in the scope and purpose of *Performance and Spirituality*. In its initial publication, *Performance and Spirituality* focused on the research of intersections between theatre, performance, and media and *new* or *alternative* modes of religion and spirituality – especially religious and spiritual currents that developed within the last two hundred years. A broadened focus of study is inaugurated with the current issue: this journal will now publish and articles that discuss intersections between live and media-based modes of performance and *all* kinds of religion and spirituality.

This change of focus is a response to a shift of perspective that has arisen among the current members of the editorial board regarding the central purposes of *Performance and Spirituality*, as well as the purposes of the research center that publishes this journal – the Institute for the Study of Performance and Spirituality (ISPS). The editors have noted that there seems to be a dearth of vocabulary for the critical discussion of religion and spirituality as they relate to theatre, performance, and media-based arts. *Performance and Spirituality* is therefore seeking articles that offer new terminologies and theories for the critical discussion of the spiritual and the religious in performance, theatre, and media. It has also been agreed that *Performance and Spirituality* should strive to publish the widest possible range and the most interdisciplinary array of scholarship within its field of study, and it is for this reason also that

the journal's focus has broadened. It is hoped that the current changes to this journal will result in the creation of a collection of research that shows the great breadth and dynamic nature of the relationship between performance and spirituality worldwide.

The articles contained in this issue reflect the widening scope of *Performance and Spirituality*. Whereas every article in the first journal touched in some way upon contemporary modes of religious and spiritual performance, the current issue includes articles that discuss long-established orthodoxies and, in some cases, even ancient forms of religious performances. Such is the case with "Saints, Snakes, and Healing in Modern and Ancient Greece and Italy," in which Evy Johanne Håland compares the symbolism of snakes in the religious rites of ancient Greek and Roman culture to the place of snakes in Christian rituals that take place in certain areas of contemporary Greece. The Hindu tradition is central to "Embodiment, Balinese Theatre, and the Ethnographer's Predicament," in which Jane Caroline Turner considers the spiritual aspect of Balinese performance and "explores some initial challenges for a western ethnographer learning Balinese performance."

At the same time, there is no lack of contemporary subject matter or criticism in this issue. Claire Maria Chamber's "'Theatre in Absentia' and Negative Theology: The 'Theatre That May or May Not Be Theatre' of Implied Violence" considers the notion of "sacred theatre" while analyzing the work of a young Seattle performance group "that rigorously makes use of ritual and altered states of consciousness achieved through bloodletting, ether inhalation, and physical exhaustion." Postmodern critical theory is explored by Karoline Gritzner, who scrutinizes the implications of the concept of "Holy Theatre" in "Spirit to Ashes, Performance to Dust: Derrida, Theatre de Complicite, and the Question of a 'Holy Theatre.'" Finally, the "spiritual experience" of singers and audiences is the object of exploration in Daniel Meyer-

Dinkgräfe's "Opera and Spirituality." The old, the new, the mainstream, the fringe, the avant-garde, and the conventional – of performance, media, visual arts, religion, and spirituality – are all addressed in this issue; this pattern will recur in future issues of *Performance and Spirituality*.

The future of *Performance and Spirituality* is foreseen as involving a wide range of research methods, increasing interdisciplinarity, international connections and collaborations, and a collection of articles written from multiple perspectives. The list of disciplines which are relevant to this journal is seemingly endless. Scholars of theatre, performance, anthropology, sociology, and religious studies (to name only a few) possess valuable insights, and contributions from scholars of these and many other disciplines are sought and welcomed. The embodiment of religion and spirituality through performance has taken place in every world culture and in every time period, and it is difficult to think of a discipline of study that has not been affected by or affected such performance at one point or another.

With such interdisciplinarity comes an assortment of methods for gathering, assessing, and integrating research findings into scholarly articles. *Performance and Spirituality* will publish research that is developed through creative practice, archival research, ethnographic research, as well as many other methods. The range of approaches to research for this journal will be so broad that future issues will contain two sections for peer-reviewed articles: (1) a section dedicated to traditional scholarly articles and (2) a section called "Research as Practice," which will contain the work of scholars who conduct research through the development and creation of new works of art.

The purpose of this new and broadened direction is to shape *Performance and Spirituality* into a journal that can enrich and complicate the field of study that concerns intersections between performance, theatre, media-based arts, religion, and spirituality. This

journal will explore such intersections in the past and the present. *Performance and Spirituality* will engage with modes of performance that are affiliated with specific spiritual and religious movements, and, at the same time, it will show how spiritual and religious movements, philosophies, and traditions have informed and shaped the development of performance, theatre, and media-based arts in many different time periods and locations. Above all, *Performance and Spirituality* will show that the relationships between performance, media, religion, and spirituality are as active, tenacious, and politically- and socially-charged today as they have been at any other point in history.