



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



Handle With Care

February 8-9th 2024

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PANEL: Affective Technology in Performance

Tyler Graham: "Empathy and Critical Distance in Hybrid Virtual Reality Performance"

- Augusto Boal writes that, in the context of theatre, empathy can cause a spectator to surrender their agency to fictional characters on a stage (93). For this reason, he warns that "[e]mpathy is the most dangerous weapon in the entire arsenal of the theatre" (93). Boal's warning haunts the world of mediatized performance. Bolter and Grusin made the observation that media industries compete in terms of their claims to immediacy, each one needing to "constitute itself as a medium that (finally) provides the unmediated experience that all previous media sought, but failed to achieve" (270). Virtual reality technology continues this trend, with researchers such as Mila Bujic et al. arguing that its affordances to immersion offer us the opportunity of "stepping into another's shoes" (1407). When we use these "empathy machines" to produce new works of performance, do we do so at the cost of the spectator's agency, as Boal warned? In my own work, I explore the affordances that VR and other telematic stages make towards fostering the spectator's sense of both empathy and agency, welcoming both their capacity to care and to engage critically with the work at hand. Through an exploratory reflection on my own collaborative devised theatre practices, I demonstrate that critical distance is not only compatible with, but may actually support, mediated experiences of empathy.

Tyler Graham is a theatre artist and researcher pursuing his PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies at York University. His work occurs at the intersection of intermedial performance and dialectical dramaturgies. Previous relevant work includes: research assistant for the hybrid VR performance *Aionos* at the 2023 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, leader Low-Poly Performance Art workshop at VRTO 2022 (in collaboration with Ari Tarr), and a VR-enabled presentation of his MA project, *Blink and Squint: The Missing Colours* at York University Sensorium's 2022 Symposium, *Re[new]All*.

Kofi Oduro: "Performance & Technology: How is Care Available & Utilized?"

- Care can manifest itself through various formats. It can be cause of itself, a practice or a Performative Act. But what if we allow the entities of Care to be distributed intentionally through all parties. Serving the participants, audience and the infrastructure they fall underneath. What if care wasn't a thing that was only to support but also dismantle the system and barriers that are not freeing those to engage rightfully and ethically in the performances they seek to engage with. In this Paper, there will be an exploration on how care can be used in performances and trickled down all the way to our various senses, essence and presence that can deviate from where they were originally based on. By using case studies from R.I.S.E performances and interactions, Livecoding & Creative Coding community, as well as a Creative Care Protocol that was designed to think of the wellbeing of artists and creatives first and always, The concept of care will not be seen as a stagnant source but a framework that within its own infrastructure can be described as a technical but yet creative addition to performances, a serious but very playful component and a fluid but rigid source of feedback and understanding to all. The examination of how experimental, innovative and emerging media and technologies will also be explored and discussed in this paper and how they can be used alongside the rights of the performers and audiences.



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Kofi Oduro (Illestpreacha) is an Experiential Storyteller that transforms sounds, data, words and code into experiences that nurture discussion, reflection, and interaction. His artistic practice is an observation of the world around us that he puts into artworks for others to relate to or disagree with. Through Videography, Poetry and Creative Coding. Website portfolio at: <https://portfolio.illestpreacha.com/links>

PANEL: Care in Collaborative Processes

Taylor Marie Graham: Bright Birds: A Summer of Working with Emerging Artists

- Summer 2023, I had the opportunity to have two of my plays produced: 1) *Frog Song*, a new children's opera at Here For Now Theatre & 2) *Corporate Finch*, a new teenage thriller which went on a four city Ontario tour. With both projects, because the characters in the plays are quite young, I got to meet and work with a fabulously talented group of emerging theatre makers. They were either in their final year of their undergrads or recently graduated. These incredible humans proved themselves to be compassionate, hilarious, courageous, curious, hard-working, and caring. I was happy to share my industry knowledge and artistic practice with them, but it's what I learned from them that I am more interested in discussing at FOOT this year. Each of them taught me a great deal about how to tell people what you need in a rehearsal room and take the time to care for others throughout the process. This has always been part of my artistic practice, but this new generation of artists reminded me of why compassion in the rehearsal room is so important and takes these concepts to new levels.

Taylor Marie Graham (she/her) is an award-winning playwright and educator living in Cambridge, Ontario / Haldimand Tract. She has an MFA in Creative Writing, is a PhD Candidate in theatre at the University of Guelph, and works as a sessional English and theatre professor at universities in Southwestern Ontario. You can find Taylor's articles in *Canadian Theatre Review*, *Intermission Magazine*, *Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, and *Canadian Literature*. Critics describe her plays and operas as, "arresting and funny" (*Slotkin*), "uncommonly cool" (*MoT*), "charmingly twisted" (*Toronto Star*), "powerful, powerful, and courageous," (*OnStage*) and "masterful. . . profound, beautifully crafted" (*StageDoor*) taylormariegraham.com

Derek Manderson: "The Dramaturgy of Team: Communal Care in Participatory Performance"

The increasingly isolated and technologically mediated post-pandemic world has defined our recent years, making it feel like the communal capacity for empathy and togetherness is rusty. For all its ability to bring people together, the theatre has done little to reinvent itself amidst the fading spark of returning to live performance. Instead, we revisit a siloed theatregoing experience wherein fellow attendees are likelier to be treated with casual indifference than care. Seeking to bridge this gap, I look to James Thompson's "aesthetics of care," based on a theatre of intimate exchange. He argues that projects invested in care should mobilize "mutual activities of sharing, support, co-working and relational solidarity within a framework of artistry" (46). Building on Thompson, I interweave game studies and sports scholarship to propose how a team-based dramaturgy is critical to this "framework of artistry," introducing a common goal that audiences must complete through their direct participation...



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- I will use 6th Man Collective's community basketball game/performance *Monday Nights* and *Strange Victory Performance's* staging of an audience script reading in *This is the Story of the Child Ruled by Fear* as case studies demonstrating how spectators can transform into active teammates. In conversation, these works reveal how imbricating care with audience participation bolsters community camaraderie and enacts networks of support for mental health. By centering the performative thrust on players reliant on reciprocal relationships, I argue for a reorientation of theatregoing designed to proffer a dynamic togetherness grounded in playful, empathetic connection and sorely needed socialization.

Derek Manderson is a multidisciplinary scholar, performer, and PhD student in Theatre and Performance Studies at York University. He locates his research at the intersection of game studies and participatory theatre, revealing the affordances, boundaries, and dramaturgical possibilities of collaborative play. He is particularly interested in exploring player agency and safety in ever-shifting performance playgrounds.

PANEL: Identity Ethics and Community Care

Saeid Asgarian: "Theatre as a tool for integration"

- I will present my research on how theatre and performance introduce new perspectives for immigrant communities and thereby assist them with integration. Using both my first-hand experience as a recent immigrant artist to Canada, and data collected from my current graduate work, I examine and blend two philosophical theories (Nelson Goodman's theory of art as a representation of life and Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action) to understand theatre's impact in integration. I have utilized and critiqued these theories through two practice-as-research performances: *Green Key* and *Absence*. I will offer both as examples that demonstrate how theatre can be a practice for integration from two perspectives: 1- Through life representation or using symbols to share an issue and increase audiences' awareness. I will discuss how not being limited to specific symbols, languages, and cultures speeds up and deepens the integration process. 2- Through paying attention to a theatre group when creating a performance becomes as a small version of society. A theatre group with people from different backgrounds through the pursuit of a common goal, seek harmony in their real, social, and mental worlds to achieve this goal. To do so, they need a better understanding of each other, and through the making of this performance, boundaries between discriminated groups in society, such as immigrants, refugees, the homeless, etc. are made permeable and may even dissolve. As a tool for social inclusion, this integration creates better conditions for everyone regarding the care of themselves and others and improve their lives.

Saeid Asgarian is a professional Iranian director with his first master's degree in Theatre Directing from the University of Tehran (2021). He has directed, written, dramaturged and stage-designed dozens of professional productions, including *Absence* (2023), *Room No. 3* (2022), *Life* (2021), *60 Minutes Minus One* (2019), *A Memory of Two Mondays* (2019), etc. His current artistic approach includes participatory and laboratory theatre to create his shows and understand better what theatre can do for society. In his current Theatre Studies graduate work at the University of Calgary, he analyzes the role of theatre as a tool for integration for immigrants.

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PANEL: Identity Ethics and Community Care

Manvi Pandey: "Navigating the Spotlight: Self-Care Practices of Indian Women Performing Artists in the Twentieth Century"

- Research in the field of self-care has gained momentum over the last few years. However, there remains a notable lack of research on the self-care practices of women in South Asia. This absence of inquiry is particularly salient, as women, in general, are often exposed to various life susceptibilities, further exacerbated by their venturing into the public sphere. This paper delves into the challenges confronted by Indian women performers in the twentieth century as they grappled with the dual expectations of excelling in the performance sphere while simultaneously acting out their role as the 'repository of tradition.' This dilemma emerged during a pivotal period when India, a newly independent nation, was simultaneously redefining the roles and expectations placed upon its women. The paper conducts a narrative analysis of autobiographies authored by three Indian female performers: 'My Homage to All' by Kanan Devi, 'The Voice of the Heart' by Mrinalini Sarabhai and 'Timepass' by Protima Bedi. The analysis unveils an intriguing facet of their self-care practices: the profound role of spirituality. These performers turned to spirituality as a means of coping with the multifaceted demands imposed upon them. The insights derived from this investigation hold valuable implications for contemporary women performers, offering valuable lessons in effectively navigating the challenges they face. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection of gender, performance, and self-care in the context of South Asia, shedding light on the resilience and resourcefulness of women who have shaped the cultural landscape of the region.

Manvi Pandey is a PhD student in the Department of Humanistic Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) Varanasi, India. She has done her master's in English from BHU and has been a part of various theatre productions since 2018. Her affiliations with theatre as an actor have resulted in her current research interest in the life narratives of female performers in twentieth century India and the amnesia surrounding their contribution to the cultural formation of the nation.

Izue Nwankwo: "Careful humour, humorous care: the multipolar dimensions of African stand-up art in global spaces"

- Care is about interdependency, particularly how people depend on each other for their needs and sustenance. Humour brings relief and a shared sense of community but can also evoke consequences, such as reinforcing negative attitudes, alienating potential allies, or destroying people's self-esteem. In the proposed paper, I explore the complex dynamics of African diaspora stand-up comedy within Canada, through performance analysis and close reading of select stage acts of two Afro-Canadian humorists, Hoodo Hersi and Arthur Simeon. The proposed paper examines how Afro-Canadian comedians use humor as a form of socio-cultural critique and expression, while also navigating the risks and challenges of offending or disparaging their audiences, communities, and selves. It delves into the intricate balance between humour and care, highlighting how both comedians navigate this delicate equilibrium to create content that resonates with audiences both locally and globally...



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- The essay underscores the multipolarity of African stand-up comedy, emphasizing its ability to transcend geographical boundaries and cultural contexts. It further examines how these comedians carefully craft their humour to address sensitive topics, fostering a sense of care and empathy. The essay concludes by asserting that African stand-up comedy, with its unique blend of humour and care, serves as a powerful tool for cultural exchange and understanding in our increasingly interconnected world. The paper concludes that Afro-Canadian stage humour is a complex and dynamic form of communication that requires careful handling and interpretation by both the comedians and the audiences.

Izue Nwankwo is an Assistant Professor of African theatre, performance and popular arts at CDTPS, U of T.

PANEL: More-Than-Human Dramaturgies

Yasmine Agocs: "Coleoptera: Using Animalism in Environmental and Migrant Theatre"

- In many forms of environmental theatre, the focus tends to be on the effects of the climate-catastrophe on humans in a dominantly Western, North American context. While it is crucial to display environmental concerns to Western audiences, there is clear neglect to the consequences of environmental crises on minoritized groups, beings, and land. I propose that in revolutionizing our environmental future, in providing care for negatively affected groups of colonial-capitalistic attempts on life, our concerns must lie in providing attention to racially and ethnically minoritized human groups and non-human animals. My proposed presentation will show an example of using animalism in both theory and creative research to dissect inclusive care implemented in theatre and academia. A short monologue—written by myself—serves as an example of concerning invasive species in Ontario, while also questioning how the land and people treat migrants and non-Natives. I feel that including animalism in creative and academic research allows for broader scopes on solutions, perspectives, and wider opportunities for discoveries of change.

Yasmine Agocs is a first-year PhD student at the CDTPS. She obtained her MA at the University of Guelph in Theatre Studies with a focus on scriptwriting as a revolutionary tool, and her BA at Brock University in Dramatic Arts. Her creative research focuses on collective memory in Chilean-Canadian play-text; as well, her interests lie in how animalism and abjection are used in these texts to discuss the exiled experience in Canada.

Irfana Majumdar: "The Forest Cycle"

- In 2022, I began working on a participatory experience framed within a mythological story from the Mahabharata about waiting for the rain. In the piece, the audience and performers collaborate to symbolically plant a forest and to tell a story. The journey for the audience is a personal one into the question of what it means to have 'an unclouded heart,' in the broader context of 'waiting for the rain'/finding ways to regenerate our troubled world. The inspiration for this piece comes from my work in Varanasi, where we have been planting a forest on our ten-acre riverside campus just outside the city. My paper is an examination of care as an intersection between care for oneself and care for the world from the lens of this piece and its conceptualization, creation process, and the workshop performances in Toronto and India.

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- The performance piece utilized a creation-framework built with eco-scenography principles and attempted to collectively re-imagine the ideas and possibilities of our relationship and responsibilities to each other and our environment(s) with the audience and performers. Thus, the attempt was to work on multiple levels of 'care' – through conception, imagination, embodied work, the application of theoretical frameworks, and audience interaction – to construct an eco- and care-centred philosophy with performers and audience members in these spaces of performance. I ask, what were the successes, limitations, and questions raised, and how could such an approach be extended and modified in future work.

James Nowak and Hillary Sunberg: "Draw Me The Sky: Revising a 17th-century Jesuit Religious Treatise Through Erasure Poetry Performance

- Draw Me The Sky, written by James Nowak and performed with Hillary Sunberg, is a short collection of erasure poems from a 17th-century religious treatise written at Québec in the Wendat language by a Jesuit missionary. (The poems are based on a contemporary English translation). The title, Draw Me The Sky, is an erasure of a short prayer that the Jesuits taught and forced upon Wendat and Haudenosaunee people in their early missions. 'Draw me to the sky' was the Jesuit attempt to render something close to 'Let me go to Heaven' in the Wendat language. As an erasure, the idea of 'drawing the sky' appealed to James as a way to imagine various ways of gesturing towards, or resembling, the gods – myth, in other words. The pieces have a sparse and metaphysical atmosphere, which is, in turns, haunting, prayerful, apocryphal, unsettling, and beautiful. Both performers share European and Christian heritages, and with this project hope to revisit and reinterpret harmful narratives originally imposed by those from whom we are descended. In so doing, we attempt to inherit and sift through some of the consequences of how our spiritual tradition arrived in this place, and the damage it caused, and still does. By "erasing" one of the earliest records of Christian doctrine composed in this part of the world, the text sifts a way into this history, and the performance invites that history into the voice, the body and the room.

Hillary Sunberg is a third-year PhD student in the University of Toronto's Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies. Her research sits at the crux of applied theatre, place-based dramaturgy, and ecocriticism, paying special attention to the relationship between nonhuman nature and Western culture in ancient myths about the earth.

James Nowak is a poet, essayist, storyteller, and book artist from Wellington County. His long essay 'Between Home and Hell' was published by Dark Mountain and his poems won the 2022 Read at The Fringe! Poetry Contest at the Eden Mills Writers' Festival. His winning entry was published in a chapbook by PS Guelph, emerge 3. His chapbook of erasure poems, Draw Me The Sky, is forthcoming in 2024.





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WORKSHOP: "Embodied Trust: Reconnecting with the Self Through Contemporary Dance"

Facilitated by Raymundo Moreno Reyes

- The "Embodied Trust" workshop, tailored for folks with or without experience in contemporary dance, invites theatre and drama practitioners on a transformative journey to deepen their connection with their bodies. Guided by a seasoned contemporary dancer, participants embark on a one-hour exploration, warming up their bodies, learning the content, and discovering innovative approaches.
- Central to this workshop is the theme of trust in the community, viewed as a profound act of Care. Participants will engage in exercises that foster a sense of trust among peers, emphasizing collaborative movement and shared experiences.
- The session concludes with a 15-minute reflective talk, highlighting the significance of trust in the creative process. Encouraging participants to share their reflections, this workshop not only enhances bodily awareness but also cultivates a supportive community where trust becomes a cornerstone for artistic exploration and collective well-being. Join us for an hour of movement, playfulness, and the nesting of a community built on trust and care.

ACTIVITY: Storied Campus Walk

In Collaboration with Shiu Hei Larry Ng, which will depart from the Front Room.

Shiu Hei Larry Ng is a registered drama therapist, applied theatre and drama-in-education practitioner, actor and director in physical theatre trained in both Lecoq and Decroux pedagogy, accredited Playback Theatre trainer, certified Feldenkrais Method practitioner, MPhil in Philosophy, master in Drama Education, and currently a MA student in Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto

WORKSHOP: "Curating Care-Filled Spaces: An Invitation to Dream Together"

Facilitated by Jill Carter and Signy Lynch

- Jill Carter and Signy Lynch request your presence at this LONG TABLE event, in which we will gather to collaboratively consider questions around how the spaces in which we work might be rendered safer for Indigenous, Black and Racialized artists; for female-identifying artists; for Deaf/deaf, Disabled and Mad artists, for 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and for artists who have been made to feel unwelcome or unsafe in the academy, the sites of public performance and/or in the spaces of digital gathering and/or performance. Adapted from Lois Weaver's Long Table practice, this salon opens up space to begin a process co-creating knowledge that will aid us all in the curation of accessible and welcoming spaces in which culture workers from all communities will be able to do their work without risk to their wellbeing.

As a researcher and theatre-worker, Jill Carter (Anishinaabe/Ashkenazi) works in Tkaron:to with many Indigenous artists to support the development of new works and to disseminate artistic objectives, process, and outcomes through community-driven research projects. Her scholarly research, creative projects, and activism are built upon ongoing relationships with Indigenous Elders, scholars, youth, artists and activists positioning her as witness to, participant in, and disseminator of oral histories that speak to the application of Indigenous aesthetic principles and traditional knowledge systems to contemporary performance.



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Signy Lynch is Assistant Professor in English and Drama at the University of Toronto Mississauga, and a graduate faculty member at the Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies. Her areas of research and teaching specialization include contemporary intercultural, diasporic, and Black theatres in Canada; interdisciplinary/intermedial and participatory performance; audience research; and theatre criticism.

KEYNOTE LECTURE: Curating With Care: Festivals, Pedagogy, Community

Guest: Ajay Heble, University of Guelph

- What might it mean for research, performance, and pedagogy to be treated as acts of care? How might we, as teachers, scholars, artists, and activists create the conditions that would make fulfilling and expansive practices of care more possible? Taking my cue and inspiration from creative, curatorial, and critical practices that seek to define broader pedagogical priorities in terms of an activist and community-based orientation, I'll consider care as a common thread that runs throughout my work as an educator, arts presenter, and scholar. I'm interested in how best, as arts presenters, educators, and community-based activists, we can participate meaningfully in enabling generative forms of community-making, critical thinking, and social practice. What might it mean to recognize the work we do at our festivals, in our classrooms, and with our communities as a vital form of activist arts-based practice and a pedagogy of care?

Dr. Ajay Heble is the founding Director of the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation (IICSI), and Professor of English at the University of Guelph. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2023 Killam Prize in the Humanities, one of Canada's most prestigious research awards. Dr. Ajay's lecture will be followed with a response by Giorelle Diokno, PhD, a Q&A with audience members, and a reception hosted at the Paul Cadario Conference Centre

PANEL: Subverting the Social Order, With Care

Tzu-Yu Hung: "Revisiting the White Terror: The White Storyteller and Taiwanese Glove Puppetry"

- How can modern theatre engage in the process of retelling difficult knowledge and if possible, in the process of any form of healing and care for history? This paper examines how Taiwanese colonial and postcolonial memory is presented in *The White Storyteller* (2019) by means of traditional glove puppetry. It first traces the history of glove puppetry under colonial rule and explores the ways *The White Storyteller* represents colonial and postcolonial trauma as well as how such trauma shaped Taiwanese identification. This paper argues that by means of a double theatrical mediation through its collaboration with traditional Taiwanese glove puppetry, the play presents the incommensurability of traumatic past and the incompleteness of historical representation. It explores the theatrical potentials of puppets onstage to portray the paradoxical condition of the White Terror as an open problem.

Tzu-Yu Hung is a PhD student at the University of Toronto's Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies. Her interests revolve around spectatorship in classical Greek tragedy and how it can be brought into discussion with contemporary spectatorship studies.



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Amin Azimi: "The Dramaturgy of Care: How to Make Theatre Under the Bombardment of Censorship"

- Contemporary Iranian theatre is a space of all-out confrontation between censorship and the works of artists committed to caring for their theatre and their audiences. This study focuses on the research questions of what trends and techniques have been used to preserve independent artistic, political, and social aspects of theatrical works against censorship and what measures have been taken to inform the audience of the political and social aspects of theatrical works. Theoretical aspects of these questions are inspired by Diana Taylor's work emphasizing theatre's role in addressing political and social crises as a kind of care. This study analyzes the works of Iranian playwrights/directors Mohammad Yaqoubi and Mohammad Rezaei Rad, along with other key figures in Iranian theatre. The focus will be on performances such as *Return to the First Battle*, *Writing in the Dark*, *Dog's Heart*, and a collection of apartment theatre performances from the last two decades. These performances have gained recognition for their unique artistic values and for overcoming censorship to spread hope among audiences. This study aims to gain insights into the dramaturgical process of Iranian theatre under censorship, identify trends and techniques used to preserve independent artistic, political and social aspects of theatrical works, analyze measures taken to inform the audience of the political and social aspects of theatrical works and contribute to the understanding of theatre's role in addressing political and social crises in oppressive contexts.

Amin Azimi is a PhD student at the Center for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. Originally from Tehran, Iran, he is a talented writer, director, and dramaturg. His academic interests include dramaturgy, post-dramatic theatre, production policies, and digital storytelling. As a dramaturg, he contributed to the *Oedipus on the Road* project, directed by Fabrice Nicot, which was staged at the Saint Germain Auditorium in Paris. Amin has published articles in prestigious international journals such as the *Asian Theatre Journal*, *Alternatives Théâtrales* and *Theater der Zeit* and is also a member of the Iranian Theatre Critics, Writers, and Researchers Association.

PANEL: Caring For (and Through) Audiences

Bethany Schaufler-Biback: "Care, Reciprocity, and the Influence of Audience-Performer Relationships on Inter-Audience Behaviour Policing"

- How does the audience-performer relationship influence audience members' inclination to uphold theatre etiquette? It is largely understood that theatre is a relational art form; audience and performers alike gather to share time and space together and in doing so create relationships amongst all present (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Heim, 2020). Though there is often a distinct divide between the audience and performers, audiences unsurprisingly seek to make their relationships reciprocal ones. This can be seen through audience members clapping, laughing, and participating as expected — generally being good stewards of Western theatre etiquette as a method to contribute to reciprocity in the audience-performer relationship (Sedgman, 2018). This paper argues that the felt responsibility from the audience-performer relationship is a purveyor of theatre etiquette, persuading audience members' desire to monitor others behaviour with the hopes to maintain the audience-performer relationship.



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- In policing how others behave, audience members tend to the felt responsibility that comes from a reciprocal relationship. Especially in the context of the pandemic where observing the behaviour of others became understood as an act of care (ensuring people are up to date on policies, masking, social distancing, etc.), this examination becomes particularly pertinent. Though, the ever-growing criticism on theatre etiquette complicates this potential care act, as the etiquette sought to be upheld is founded upon issues such as racism, ableism, and classism (Kuppers 2018; Sedgman 2018; Simpson 2017). This paper seeks to consider how the audience-performer relationship influences how audience members gather, specifically asking which audience members have the insider knowledge to speak to the preservation of the audience-performer relationship.

Bethany Schaufler-Biback is a MA student at the Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies. She is a recent graduate from Queen's University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Hons., in Drama. Her research investigates audience care, accessibility, and affect. She has had the opportunity to present her work at the Canadian Association for Theatre Research and at the Global Undergraduate Awards. Bethany also works as a theatre practitioner, with particular interest in stage management, accessibility coordination, and technical direction.

Charlotte Dorey: "Negotiating Inter-Audience Conflict in asses.masses"

- Theatre has long been used as a forum for airing out grievances, resolving conflicts, and even a means of fostering social and political change (in particular, Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed). Participatory theatre often asks its audience to perform some sort of labour to ensure the progression of the show. Therefore, it is an ideal form for a show exploring themes of work and "sharing the load of the revolution" (asses.masses.work). How can theatre, and especially participatory theatre, allow spectators to manage and engage with conflict (both within the audience and within the story) effectively? Drawing on the work of scholars such as Augusto Boal, Gareth White, and Jacques Rancière, this paper will focus on asses.masses by Milton Lim and Patrick Blenkarn. Based on my own audience experience seeing asses.masses at the Festival of Live Digital Art (FOLDA) in 2022 and The Theatre Centre in fall 2023. asses.masses is "a custom-made video game designed to be played onstage... Brave spectators take turns each night stepping forward from [the audience]... It is up to the audience and their self-elected leaders to make decisions" (asses.masses.work). To do this, it borrows the form and is inspired by video games, emphasizing the theme of taking "control" literally. This paper will ask how do audience/participants negotiate the best course of action in a participatory performance when there is conflict within various groups? What can we learn about participatory theatre through the show's themes of labour, internal conflict, and the control of a people over their circumstances?

Charlotte Dorey is currently pursuing her Master's of Arts at York University in Theatre, Dance & Performance Studies and holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Drama from Queen's University where she completed a capstone project under Dr. Jenn Stephenson. She also worked under Dr. Stephenson and Mariah Horner on their project play/PLAY: *Dramaturgies of Participation*. Her current research focuses on moments of ritual and ceremony in theatre, more specifically within participatory performance.



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Jacob Pittini: "Defending the Offending: Embracing Diverse Audience Behaviour in Research"

- In my recent MA dissertation, "Modern Misbehaviour: Surveying Post-Pandemic Theatre Etiquette in London, 2021-2023" I researched the evident tension dividing theatre audiences over proper behaviour at the theatre. My research included immersing myself in theatre-going contexts as fieldwork and generating a profile of the 'misbehaving' audience members according to online news articles and social media. I began to examine how research could serve as an intervention into the post-pandemic prevalence of polarization. Differing beliefs over appropriate behaviours push audience members into silos, those who supposedly know better and seek to police those they condemn as disrupting the experience for others. The third chapter of my dissertation "Defending the Offending" sought to contest this binary and counter the largely unilateral discourse bemoaning a recent shift towards misbehaviour in theatre audiences. To do so I explored a variety of confounding variables contributing to audiencing contexts which might help explain modern misbehaviour, historic shifts in behavioural trends, and the perspectives of scholars defending diverse behaviour and calling for the restructuring of theatre etiquette. By considering how theatre venues, marketing, lockdown desocialization, technological advancement and other factors are all contributing to complicating audience behaviour I sought to care for these audience members subject to censure in mass media. For FOOT 2024 "Handle with Care" I seek to reflect on this process of 'defending the offending,' and how it opened my eyes to research as intervention to polarization, aiming to deescalate tensions, validate diverse lived experiences and deepen the complexity of current social concerns.

Jacob Pittini is a first year PhD student at the University of Toronto's Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies. Jacob recently received his MA in theatre and performance at Queen Mary University of London with his dissertation surveying how London theatre audiences are constructing and deconstructing notions of theatre etiquette in the post-pandemic era. Beyond audience studies, Jacob's interests also include immersive participatory theatre and pedagogies of theatre education. He is invested in co-theorizing with audiences of contemporary Canadian theatre about their drive to participate in performance events, collaboratively exploring Canadian theatre's social potential and cultural relevance.

PANEL: Care, Imagined

EJ Kneifel: "Grief Ankle: Where does Ekphrasis Go?"

- Following my thesis' third chapter, this presentation-workshop begins with an image description exercise. This everyday form of digital access, a chunk of ekphrasis, is a unit both for care and creation. A brief talk, then, building from the work of Finnegan Shannon on image description as poetry, Jill Dolan on performative writing ("writing that does"), and Sean Lee's contention (building from Jose Esteban Muñoz) that we might think of disability justice as a horizon. Building that first unit of image description to the larger scale of care work-focused hosting and performance, the participants will then get a chance to rest, to close their eyes if they would like, and hear each other's images performed aloud.





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EJ Kneifel is a psycholinguist, poet-critic, friend of a friend. The author of VIO-LETS, co-creator of collective poetry podcast CATCH, interview web series PLAYD8s, and devised theatre production ORANGING, after Renee Gladman's Event Factory, their current focus is formalizing the patterns of ekphrasis as they ricochet through a life: echoing the gap between child and mother (psychoanalysis), self and self (trans phenomenology), friend and friend (performance).

Maria Zarillo: "Queer Utopian Theory for Systemic Change in Performing Arts Organizations"

- Art serves as a vital conduit for social change and individual empowerment, shaping our society in profound ways. However, beneath the surface, there are many challenges that hinder the sector's growth, specifically the need for new frameworks to address the power imbalance between Canadian performing arts non-profits and freelance arts workers (e.g., actors, designers, production crew, etc.) In the 1980s and '90s, the first wave of queer theory arose concurrently with the dissipation of the broader use of utopian theory. Queer theory was critiqued mainly as having a preoccupation with "individual self-fashioning". However, the release of José Esteban Muñoz's book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* in 2009 marked a surge of research into queer utopia as a concept. His book presented a counterargument to the anti-relational, individualistic queer theory that came before. According to Muñoz, queerness and queer futurity are methods of navigating the world that help individuals see beyond present-day plights to a communal, utopian future. The research question guiding my research paper is: What is the utility of the concept of queer utopia in addressing the power imbalance between Canadian performing arts non-profits and freelance arts workers? For FOOT32, I propose a presentation on the findings and discussion from my two content-analysis-based literature reviews on queer utopia and social change priorities in the performing arts sector pertaining to power imbalances. The literature to be reviewed consists of academic scholarship engaging the concept of queer utopia and applied literature such as calls-to-action, policy documents, and strategic plans from the performing arts sector.

Maria Zarrillo (they/them) is a queer, non-binary, theatre & film producer with a background in stage management, mentorship, event organizing, advocacy, marketing, publicity, and audience services. They have worked with a variety of companies and communities in these capacities both locally and nationally. In addition to their freelance career, Maria is currently the Managing Producer with the frank theatre company and the Producer with Queer Based Media. Maria is a graduate of Studio 58's production program, the University of Winnipeg with a major in Theatre & Film and a minor in Human Rights, and they are currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Justice Studies at Royal Roads University.



Handle With Care

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PANEL: Care, Applied

Toni Lester: "A Contemplative Caring Space for Marginalized Artists"

- My presentation will address two themes: care in the study and practice of performances, and rituals and practices of self-care and collective care undertaken by performance practitioners. I am the founder of The Gardarev Center, a contemplative artist residency program, think tank and curatorial project that supports and presents creative artists who largely come from traditionally viewed marginalized communities. A large part of the Center's programs offer practices and techniques from contemplative spiritual traditions to help folks get grounded in the work that they do. The presentation will cover who the Center serves, and give some examples of what contemplative care looks like in the context of our programs. A brief guided walk thru with the audience of a caring contemplative practice will also be shared.

Dr. Toni Lester, founder of The Gardarev Center, is a creative artist, cultural critic, academic, scholar, and activist whose written work explores the interconnections between various forms of marginalized identities, spirituality, creativity and nature.

Alexandra Palma: "Exploring New Futures with Forum Theatre: A creative approach to empowering performing artists out of neglect and into care"

- Performing artists across Toronto are at high risk of experiencing neglect, isolation, and reduced quality of life. Impacted by employment precarity, restricted access to healthcare and a lack of shared spaces, Li and Donn (2022) report that performing artists' ability to engage in their artistic practice is a major social determinant of health that requires further attention. Through the practice of Forum Theatre, I aim to explore how performing artists in Toronto experience care, neglect, and hope for their future, as it pertains to their ability to engage in their artistic practice, in a post-pandemic context. As an actor who has faced barriers to artistic practice since 2020, I aim to uplift my community members by centering their voices through devising practices. Forum Theatre embodies a pedagogy of care as participants engage in a dramaturgical process of devising scenes to reclaim past experiences of neglect and imagine new futures. My presentation will explore Forum Theatre workshop development including recruitment, facilitating critical discussions, and scene development. Discussion themes will focus on artists' ability to engage in their artistic practice through employment precarity, restricted healthcare and access to shared spaces. I will leverage my role as a patient-partner researcher at UHN's Artist Health Centre by piloting this project with existing patients of the Centre who identify as performing artists (actors, musicians, dancers, singers, and poets). This work seeks to empower artists through centering their lived experiences as primary sources of knowledge. Findings can support program improvements at the Artist Health Centre and advocate to enhance access to art-making spaces across Toronto.





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Alexandra Palma is an actor, social science researcher and multi-disciplinary artist from Toronto. Driven by curiosity, Alexandra is currently researching the social determinants of health for performing artists at UHN'S Artist Health Centre. Alexandra is excited to build knowledge and tell meaningful stories alongside her community, combining her Master of Education from OISE at the University of Toronto, with her passion for performance. Alexandra trains at RAW Actor Studio and some of her favourite projects to date include Amber Von Tussle in *Hairspray*, Maggie in *Love After Life*, and Tanya in *Mamma Mia*. Follow along at Alexandrapalma.com.

Shiu Hei Larry Ng: "Healing and Care through Embodied Metaphorical Imagination that is Aesthetically Mediated and Socially Oriented: A trauma-informed applied/pedagogical theatre intervention as a response to social trauma"

- Social trauma is more common than it is usually acknowledged. Its influences take many more forms than people expect. Mainstream therapeutic models for trauma are mostly cognitively and verbally dominant and focus on symptom relief, usually favoring a direct approach relying on exposure intervention, while care for conditions indirectly or implicitly related to social trauma are often invisible, marginalized or individualized/personalized under such models. Alternative therapies and care practices, including trauma-oriented or trauma-informed drama therapy, emerge as a response to such situation, although the influences from the mainstream cognitive and verbal paradigm is still strong upon their development. Based on the author's clinical experiences as a registered drama therapist working with youths and young adults affected by social trauma and/or developmental trauma, possibilities of an indirect approach making use of embodied Imagination in a metaphorical manner for healing and care practices are seen. Moreover, although drama therapy and other modalities of applied theatre have not much communication with each other as they generally developed as separate fields in practical contexts, the author saw the potentials of bringing these experiences of indirect care practices from drama therapy to the practices of applied theatre, which have a stronger and more explicit pedagogical and social orientation, in order to develop new forms of trauma-informed and care-based interventions in response to social/ socially embedded issues by participatory theatre as embodied and aesthetic acts of service for both the community and individuals therein. Simultaneously, drama therapy can also be reexamined/ revised under a more social-political horizon.

Shiu Hei Larry Ng is a registered drama therapist, applied theatre and drama-in-education practitioner, actor and director in physical theatre trained in both Lecoq and Decroux pedagogy, accredited Playback Theatre trainer, certified Feldenkrais Method practitioner, MPhil in Philosophy, master in Drama Education, and currently a MA student in Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto





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KEYNOTE PERFORMANCE: *X and Da Spirit*

Guest: **Donovan Hayden**

- X is an unassuming Black man. That is until he encounters a mural beneath a bridge, where 'da Spirit of the Struggle' transmits the knowledge of Black resistance to him in an instant. Now he must find his place in the Struggle, guided by an artist, MC, who challenges X's understanding of the movement and the personal consequences of activism" *Theatre Passe Muraille*

Donovan Hayden is a Black Canadian theatre creator and political organizer. He strives to tell stories that engage, challenge, and activate audiences. He values doing theatre that is communal and centers the dynamic lives of Black people in North America. He is currently based in Toronto and an Organizer at the political nonprofit Progress Toronto. Blending his politics with theatre has become a way for him to ask questions and play around with answers.

FOOT32 "Handle With Care" was organized by CDTPS graduate students Martin Austin, Alisha Grech and Hillary Sunberg.

Martin Austin is a second year PhD student at CDTPS. His research concerns the high incidence of workplace misconduct, wage precarity, and other ethical concerns in North American concert dance. Martin is the Research Assistant for the SSHRC-funded "Category Is: A Study of Ballroom, Black Excellence & Anti-Black Racism in Canada" through the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, and a Research Assistant for the Centre's Institute for Dance Studies under Dr. Seika Boye. Outside of academia, Martin is a reviews contributor for *Intermission Magazine*, covering events for Canadian Stage, Toronto Dance Theatre, and more.

Alisha Grech (she/they) is a fourth year PhD Candidate at CDTPS. As a doctoral student, Alisha's research mobilizes at the intersection of gender performativity and gender-based violence in the United States. In addition to her research, Alisha's most recent written works can be found in *Women's Studies Quarterly* as well as *Intermission Magazine*. For more information and full performance credits, please visit alishagrech.com

Hillary Sunberg is entering her third year as a CDTPS PhD student. Her research focuses on using pedagogical performance techniques such as process drama to interpret ancient earth narratives through an ecocritical lens. Aside from her own research, Hillary is managing Andrea Most's SSHRC-funded "In A Beginning" project, which uses ritual, visual art, performance, and land-based learning to potentiate an experiential translation of the book of Genesis. As an artist, Hillary spends her time creating eco-portraits of mythic figures on social media, writing verbatim plays based on the lived experiences of evangelical and ex-evangelical women, and piloting arts-based educational programs in Atlantic Canada.