Call for Papers: ADSA Conference

Archives, Artists & Absences

Kaurna Country, Adelaide
27 November – 1 December 2023

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It is what the archive does not say that troubles me the most . . . What do we do with the undocumented, the erased, the redacted, the unrecorded, the disappeared, the crossed out, the burned out, the missing of it all? (Johnson 43-4)

Absences and gaps in the archive challenge our work as scholars and practitioners of theatre, drama, dance, and performance studies. Much of our research and creative practice lives in "gaps and empty spaces" (Taubert & Ablieovich 301), and seeks to fill them with informed speculation. How, then, do we enter the past – whether that past is minutes or millennia ago – while remaining sensitive to what has been lost, what has never been remembered, and what was deliberately forgotten? As we seek new orientations towards the past and new methods to record it, so too will archives change, especially those of artists that are "a receptacle of memory on the surface of the skin" (Bardiot 33).
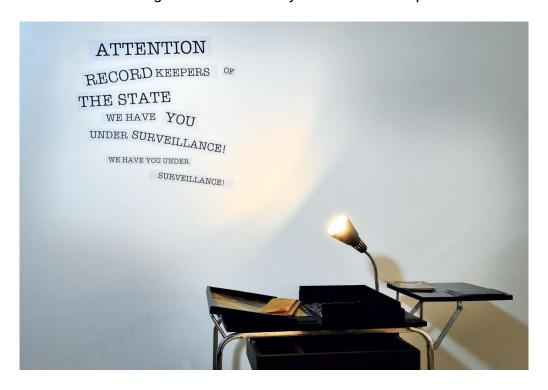
Even then, the tattered remnants of the past both inside and outside the archive might never be enough – whatever our desire to reclaim them, and however powerful the tools we develop. Writing from Wiradjuri and Narungga standpoints, poet-scholars Jeanine Leane and Natalie Harkin describe the archive as "the assemblage of feelings, objects and stories we gather, and all that is unknowingly gathered around us" (52). While the archive has "a history of preservation so painstakingly maintained", it also carries "a history of loss for all that is discarded and deemed abject, marginal, inferior and irrelevant to future memory" (Leane & Harkin 52). At this conference, we invite colleagues to grapple with what is missing, and what might never be found.

Thinking about documentation leads us to interrogate practices of forgetting and remembering, and the allure of anniversaries. In 2023, we mark 50 years since the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Patrick White, "arguably the most eminent of Australian writers" (Tsiolkas 9). This occasion leads us to ask how we might re-vision the legacy of this multiply-archived writer. It is also 21 years since the launch of the AusStage database. In AusStage, newly augmented with data from Theatre Aotearoa, we have access to the largest performing arts database in the world, with close to half a million records. This repository allows us to create distant visions that can challenge our local thinking. At the same time, AusStage reflects our research back to us, and so we invite interrogations of our role as builders and custodians of datasets, repositories, and archives.

We offer the following prompts and possibilities as starting points for thinking about and responding to this year's conference theme:

- What is the value, service, and function of the archive to performance history and to performance practice?
- Where are the blind spots, the partialities, the shadows, the echoes in the archives, and what does this mean for our discipline?
- What has been deliberately forgotten in the archive and the repertoire? How might the archive serve as gatekeeper or oppressor?
- How do we as artists, creators, and performers contribute to a living archive?
- How are we documenting and archiving our performance and scholarly practice in personal scrapbooks, photo albums, and desk drawers, and how might this complicate, decentre, or queer our view of the archive?
- How do anniversaries and other periodisations help to construct archives?
- How can the archive inform, interrogate, or complicate teaching and training?
- What have we chosen to document, capture, and privilege in our practice as artists and as scholars, and what have we chosen to neglect, reject, or deem irrelevant?
- How does the rise of AI and the development of the digital humanities inflect the future of datasets, repositories, and archives of performance?

We invite abstracts of **250 words** responding to these questions, or other scholarly or creative provocations raised by our conference theme, to be submitted via this form by **Monday 3 July 2023**. We invite proposals for 20-minute paper presentations, artistic research presentations, workshops and roundtable discussions, as well as any other formats that might suit the diversity of research and practice in our field.

Working Groups

Some pilot working groups will be meeting at the 2023 ADSA Conference, and we invite members to express their interest in joining a working group as part of their proposal. The working groups meeting at this conference are:

- Australasian Actor Training Network (AusAct);
- Dance Research Australia (DRA);
- Financial Data in Performing Arts Research;
- Performing Arts Heritage Network (PAHN); and
- Scenography and Performance Design.

Each working group sets its own working practices, and descriptions of the groups and details about their meetings can be found on the ADSA website. In all cases, members are welcome to attend working group meetings without presenting; additionally, any proposals not able to be accommodated within working groups will automatically be considered for inclusion in the wider conference sessions.

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References

Bardiot, Clarisse. *Performing Arts and Digital Humanities: From Traces to Data*. Wiley-ISTE, 2021.

Harkin, Natalie. "ATTENTION." *Archive-Fever-Paradox [2]*. Fontanelle Gallery and Studio, Bowden, Adelaide, 2014. Photo: Denys Finney.

Johnson, Odai. "The Size of All That's Missing." *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance Historiography*, edited by Tracy C. Davis and Peter W. Marx, Routledge, 2020, pp. 43-65.

Leane, Jeanine, and Natalie Harkin. "When Records Speak We Listen: Conversations with the Archive." *Law's Documents: Authority, Materiality, Aesthetics*, edited by Katherine Biber, Trish Luker and Priya Vaughan, Routledge, 2021, pp. 51-70.

Taubert, T. Sofie, and Ruthie Abeliovich. "Dossier — Theatrical Vestiges: Material Remains and Theatre Historiography." *Theatre Research International*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2020, pp. 297-302.

Tsiolkas, Christos. *On Patrick White: Writers on Writers*. Black Inc., 2018.

Working Group: Australasian Actor Training Network (AusAct)

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Description

AusAct calls for presentations, panels, and workshops detailing actor training scholarship by researchers, practitioners and pedagogues working with original performer training methods developed within the Australasian context. This working group focuses on training pedagogies and research in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and their relationship to place, space, land, environment, culture and technologies. AusAct provides an avenue for the sharing of original materials and knowledge in dialogue within the Australasian performer training context. This working group meeting aims to widen the AusAct network, to have a broader discussion of current actor training in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, to share findings with ADSA members, and to continue to bridge the gap between practice and research.

Membership

Since its inception in 2018, AusAct has held 3 face-to-face conferences and one online conference. Locations included Charles Sturt University (where it was founded), QUT, and Arts Academy, Federation University. As of 2023, the conference has seen approximately 75 papers, 6 panels, 20 workshops and 4 performances. The conference has included presentations by academics and practitioners from Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and beyond. AusAct welcomes new and existing members to join this working group at the ADSA conference.

Working Practices

The AusAct Working Group will meet and share paper presentations, panels, and workshops dealing with any aspect of Australasian performer training. While proposals that reflect some engagement with practices of archiving, remembering, and forgetting in line with the conference theme are encouraged, the working group accepts broader submissions in line with the above description.

Working Group: Dance Research Australia (DRA)

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Description

Dance Research Australia (DRA) is an international network that curates, connects and activates research toward building capacity and invigorating dance praxis locally and globally amid the ever-present histories and current critical discourses of the Australian context. Contributing to the Australasian dance ecology, DRA aims to build capacity by facilitating a series of new engagement platforms including post graduate forums, reading groups, publications, presentations of artist led research and scholarly panels. The network focuses on community-building, visibility, and inclusivity: that is, broadening the current scope through encouraging new work and attracting, connecting and supporting emerging and established researchers. It is focused on Australasian scholars, writers and artist-researchers working in the field of dance and allied fields both inside and outside the institution, and both locally and internationally. It advocates for the capacity of dance research to attend to anti-colonial imperatives that connect it with critical change toward equity and justice.

Membership

Dance Research Australia is a community initially established with over 70 members which had its inaugural meeting at ADSA in 2020. It is focused on Australasian scholars, writers and artist-researchers working in the field of dance and allied fields both inside and outside the institution, and both locally and internationally. The working party currently consists of Dr Jo Pollitt (convenor 2022-2023), Shinjita Roy (PG rep), Dr Tia Reihana, Dr Rachael Swain, Dr Siobhan Murphy, Dalisa Pigram, and Rhiannon Newton, with Associate Professor Erin Brannigan (currently on sabbatical).

Working Practices

The DRA Working Group will meet via an person/hybrid format with the goal of building connection with the community. To this end we will host an open forum which will feature updates from DRA in relation to current projects and engage in consultation with DRA community, we will also share a DRA seminar and work to connect people and papers in response to the wider ADSA conference call.

Working Group: Financial Data in Performing Arts Research

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Sarah Thomasson, sarah.thomasson@vuw.edu.au

Description

The initial interests of this group emerge from the development of a new financial table in AusStage. It aims to investigate the relationship between cultural policy and the financial landscape for the performing arts in Australasia – regional, state, national and international. It seeks innovative and pragmatic approaches to combining economic and cultural data designed to impact the development of government policy by providing evidence-based analyses on the Australian performing arts culture. The group invites contributions from researchers interested in combining the relational possibilities of economic data with rich cultural data, including that held in AusStage, Theatre Aotearoa and other repositories.

Membership

The group aims to:

- showcase AusStage's new functionality in its financial table;
- compare methods designed to interrogate assumptions concerning the financial landscape its relationship to cultural policy;
- develop critical mass in data aimed to increase uptake by end-users; and
- explore funding options for the development of research based on financial data.

Working Practices

We call for papers to be submitted prior to the conference and pre-circulated in advance of the working group meeting. This will facilitate the structure of the inaugural meeting, and establish directions moving forward for a program of research, including the question of meetings in between the annual ADSA conference. Proposals should include some detail of methodology in the interrogation of financial data, and/or detail of the cultural dataset on which the research draws. The working group accepts broader submissions in line with the above description, regardless of their intersection with the wider conference theme.

Working Group: Performing Arts Heritage Network (PAHN)

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Description

The Performing Arts Heritage Network (PAHN) is concerned with capturing and interrogating the ephemera of performance. In addition to the complexity of the performing arts scene, the transitory nature of any theatrical, musical, or audio-visual performance makes the task of documenting it and collecting it particularly difficult. In the context of the overarching conference theme, "Archives, Artists & Absences", this working group considers the forces that shape the museological and archival heritage of the performing arts. PAHN is particularly interested the status of 'data' in heritage and historiography, and how archives, collections, and repositories might shape the future of the performing arts.

Membership

For its membership, PAHN draws on performing arts collections in museums and other institutions. Over the years, membership has dropped; Covid has had a significant impact on PAHN. Performing arts collections risk becoming Cinderella collections. In convening this working group at ADSA, PAHN aims to revitalise its membership and stimulate debates on where performing arts collections and archives exist within the context of museums, universities, libraries and other institutions. PAHN welcomes new, past, and existing members to join this working group at the ADSA Conference.

Working Practices

The PAHN Working Group will meet and share 20-minute work-in-progress papers, with a particular focus on the intersection of history and heritage, in any material, format, genre, or level of society. Proposals should also reflect some engagement with the nature of collection(s), in line with the wider ADSA Conference call.

Working Group: Scenography and Performance Design

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Madeline Taylor, madeline.taylor@qut.edu.au

Description

The Scenography and Performance Design Working Group will provide a space to share research and pedagogical advancements in all areas of design for performance, including spatial, set, costume, lighting, and sound, through to intermedial design practice and digital scenography. We welcome all researchers whose work intersects with the concerns of scenography, be it questions of space, time, audience, technology, aural, visual, material and environmental aspects of performance environments. Our goal is to foster a collaborative Australasian network for performance design researchers, practitioners, architects, technicians, and tertiary educators and researchers to share advances in practice, pedagogy and scholarly work. The Scenography and Performance Design working group aims to be a long-lasting group that connects participants throughout the year, culminating in an in-person/hybrid meeting at the annual ADSA conference.

Membership

Our aim is to solidify the growing body of Australasian researchers specialising in scenography and performance design. Many of us are actively involved with international research networks, yet lack a home where we can share our achievements and advance the national dialogue on performance design. This working group will provide a space for this sharing, to connect those investigating by the power of design in performance, to find avenues to collaborate, co-publish, and support one another in our research.

Working Practices

Working Group sessions will be a mix of:

- Invited speakers (curated by the co-conveners) on timely and relevant topics;
- Group discussion on issues or opportunities facing the field;
- Paper presentations and/or informal sharing of research projects; and
- Networking and developing opportunities to co-research.

We invite proposals for 20-minute paper presentations on any aspect of scenography and performance design, as well as shorter 7-minute flash talk updates on in-progress research projects. We also welcome proposals for panel discussions.