
CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT: HISTORY, MEMORY, PERFORMANCE

ORGANIZED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA AND
THE CENTRE FOR PUBLIC HISTORY, CARLETON UNIVERSITY
19-21 APRIL 2012, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA,
OTTAWA, ONTARIO (CANADA)

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The organizing committee:

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“History – the past transformed into words or paint or dance or play – is always a performance” (Greg Denning, “Performing on the Beaches of the Mind: An Essay”).

In the context of Paul Ricoeur’s work on the conjunctions of history, memory, and the production of narrative (*La Mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, 2000), and heeding the invitation of Hayden White (and others) to re-think traditional understandings of historical writing and interpretation, historians such as Greg Denning have argued that historical representation, in whatever form it takes, is a performative act. At the same time, theatre scholars such as Freddie Rokem have explored the relationship between theatrical energies and performing history on stage. At the intersection of such work is the idea that theatre itself becomes a witness to history being made, a notion present in the concept of memory and the processes of remembering and forgetting. This international, interdisciplinary conference explores themes relating to history, memory and performance. We hope it will generate discussions about how historical meaning is created in the theatre and how theatrical performances shape our understanding of the past, including:

- Museums, museality, and performance
- Staging historical events and cataclysms
- Theatre of (auto)biography and testimony
- History plays, history, and historiography
- Original practices, heritage, and innovation
- The canon, the archive, and the repertoire
- The body and space as sites of memory
- History, new media, and performance
- (Post)memory and (post)trauma
- Memory theatre and resonant spaces
- Theatre as / and memorial
- Storytelling, memory, and performance

This three-day conference will feature keynote speakers including Professor Freddie Rokem (Tel-Aviv University) and Jean-Pierre Sarrazac (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3), plenary paper sessions, working groups (theory-based), workshops (practice-based), and performance events.

To register, please select one of the following options and complete the attached registration form.

1. **Papers:** Please submit a 300-word abstract for a 20-minute paper relating to one or more conference themes. Graduate students are encouraged to self-identify in order to be considered for one of the student-curated paper sessions.
2. **Working groups (theory-based):** Please submit a short (200 words or less) description of your research topic and its connection to the working group that you have selected. Participation in a working group will involve assigned reading and e-mail discussion prior the meeting of the conference. During the conference, the group will meet for a three-hour conversation arising from this preparation. Graduate students are welcome. Please indicate your first and second choices among the following:

Museums, objects and performance (David Dean, in English)

This working group will consider museums as performances, not only in the more obvious sense of theatrical performances on auditorium stages or in gallery spaces, but in their geographies, spatial arrangements, architecture and exhibitionary strategies. I hope we will be able to consider the proposition that objects have agency, explore the idea of the curator as performer and engage with the suggestion that museum audiences function very much like theatre audiences: that however powerful exhibitionary strategies may be, the authority of the museum is shaped by audience perception and experience.

Memory, autobiography, and testimony (Yana Meerzon, in English)

The recent development of autobiography, testimony, documentary, and verbatim theatre points at how we prefer to deal with national histories and collective memory today. We approach the public events through the lens of personal stories. We put the *autobiographical I*, the body of the performer, in the center of a theatrical event, thus searching for the authenticity of our own experience as spectators and co-creators of the show. This seminar invites future participants to discuss and challenge the above statements. When sending in your proposal, suggest one (1) theoretical reading that is essential to this topic and your research, something that you would like this group to comment upon in the course of upcoming several months and during the conference meeting itself.

Original performance practices and innovation (Kathryn Prince, in English)

What is at stake when plays from the theatrical past are performed today? In the intersections between the theatrical codes of these plays' own time and place and the conventions of contemporary performance, can scholars and practitioners find scope for insight, innovation, and inspiration, or merely conflict and confusion? Does the past have any claim at all on the present? In this working group, the national, historical, and theoretical interests of participants will determine a short list of assigned readings that will, in turn, generate research questions to be explored via e-mail and in our conversation when we meet in April.

La mise en scène des scélérats – (Tibor Egervari, en français)

Contrairement à ce qui se passe au cinéma où, jusqu'au dernier quart du XXe siècle, les vedettes jouaient essentiellement les héros « positifs », les personnages scélérats sont parmi les plus grands rôles au théâtre (Richard III, Cléopâtre dans Rodogune, Caligula et autres Shylock). Que nous apprennent la volonté et le plaisir de dramaturges et d'acteurs anciens, et même modernes, à créer ces personnages repoussants? Des personnages scélérats sont-ils encore de mise à notre époque postmoderne?

Le théâtre commémoratif dans le contexte post-colonial (Alvina Ruprecht, en français)

Le théâtre commémoratif est souvent une manière de résoudre les contradictions du passé en resituant des événements dans le contexte idéologique du présent. Qu'il s'agisse de rendre hommage aux héros, de rassembler une population autour d'une vision collective, de corriger la mémoire ou de clarifier les ambiguïtés, le geste commémoratif vise toujours à orienter le regard pour le bien d'une communauté. Cette vision est d'autant plus problématique et complexe lorsque ce passé est filtré par une vision « postcoloniale » de l'histoire. Des textes de Mnouchkine, de Boukman, de Glissant, de Fanon, de Genvrin, de Dongala, de Trouillot, de Salhi, de Métellus, de Cavé et de Chauvet entre bien d'autres, pourraient nous fournir quelques pistes de réflexion.

Archives et historiographie théâtrale (Sylvain Schryburt, en français)

Que disent ou taisent les archives théâtrales? Quelles limites imposent-elles aux savoirs (historiographiques, esthétiques, critiques, etc.) sur le théâtre du passé? À l'inverse, qu'ont-elles à nous apprendre? Comment les faire parler? Et d'abord, comment définir ce qu'est ou non l'archive théâtrale : par sa nature, par son usage, par le rapport particulier qu'elle entretient au passé? Voilà quelques-unes des questions qui pourront être discutées ou débattues dans le cadre de cet atelier intitulé « Archives et historiographie théâtrale ». Les étudiants de deuxième et de troisième cycle sont bienvenus.

Théâtre québécois d'hier et d'aujourd'hui (Hervé Guay, en français)

La séance Théâtre québécois d'hier et d'aujourd'hui abordera le problème de la distance historique posée par certaines pièces et mises en scène présentées au Québec. On se demandera notamment si la connaissance limitée de l'histoire nationale et internationale peut poser des problèmes dans la réception de ces oeuvres ou encore laisser libre cours à l'imagination du public, qui peut ainsi plus facilement accepter des versions non-officielles d'épisodes historiques. La question de la relecture du répertoire, qui présume la connaissance du passé de la part du public, ne manquera pas non plus de faire partie des discussions au menu de cette séance.

- 3. Workshops (practice-based):** Please submit a short (200 words or less) description of your current theatre project or research topic and its connection to the workshop that you have selected. The workshops are open to performers and non-performers alike, and graduate students are welcome. Participation in a workshop might involve some prior preparation (for example, memorizing a short script or watching video footage) and a three-hour activity during the conference. Please, indicate your first and second choices among the following:

Social Effects of Storytelling (John Walsh, in English)

This workshop will consider storytelling as social practice. The “social effects of storytelling” refers to the ways in which stories order our worlds, ascribe meaning to our experiences, and help give shape to our individual and collective selves. I would like to explore how, in their telling and re-telling, stories about the past operate as foundational epistemologies for the formation of communities, contributing to the definition of who, where, and when “we” are. It is hoped that we will examine a range of different forms of storytelling – textual, spoken, performed, displayed – but all of which offer us the chance to reflect on the relationships between narrative, historical knowledge, and community.

History, video games, and performance (Shawn Graham, in English)

This workshop will consider the playing of video games as a kind of performance of historical narratives. We will look at how the hidden rule-sets of video games promote various kinds of historical learning, the ties between video games and epic poetry, and how we can change the rules to promote the kind of learning or historiography we might want. Participants are encouraged to browse <http://playthepast.org> before the workshop.

Body as memory (Daniel Mroz, Bilingual)

"Warmth is Memory". This compelling metaphor from traditional Chinese medicine will guide our investigation of affect, dynamic movement and the memory of sensed experience.

Espace, histoire et mémoire (Angela Konrad, en français)

« TRACE »: lecture d'un texte théâtral élaboré dans le cadre du cours de Dramaturgie THE 4523. Il s'agit d'une création collective qui a comme thématique centrale la mémoire et l'oubli. Avec les étudiants du département de théâtre de l'Université d'Ottawa sous la direction d'Angela Konrad.

Les métamorphoses du répertoire sur la scène nord-américaine et européenne (Jean Stéphane Roy and Louise Frappier, en français)

À cheval entre la théorie et la pratique, cet atelier s'intéressera aux rapports que les metteurs en scène contemporains d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord entretiennent avec le répertoire. Les questions suivantes seront abordées : Par quelles voies le patrimoine théâtral peut-il constituer un matériau propice à la création et à l'innovation ? Dans quelle mesure le processus de création est-il conditionné par l'histoire du théâtre et le legs de la tradition ? De quelle manière la mise en scène contemporaine des «classiques» peut-elle poser un regard critique sur cette histoire ? Et quelles différences peut-on observer entre metteurs en scène franco-canadiens et metteurs en scène européens quant à la posture adoptée face au répertoire ?

THE DEADLINE FOR ALL ABSTRACTS AND INQUIRIES IS OCTOBER 10, 2011

Please use the attached submission form.

All applicants will be notified of the selection committee's decision by November 1, 2011. Delegates planning to participate in working groups and workshops will be expected to register for the conference by November 15, 2011.

The registration fee of 80\$ (40\$ for students and theatre practitioners) includes the opening reception, closing cocktail, and daily lunches and breaks. The optional conference dinner is \$50, including a three-course meal and wine.

For more information, please contact the organizing committee at hmp.hmr@uottawa.ca.

Please save the dates, plan to join us, and share this announcement with your colleagues and contacts.

**HISTORY, MEMORY, PERFORMANCE
SUBMISSION FORM**

FIRST and LAST NAME _____

AFFILIATION _____

ADDRESS _____

E-MAIL CONTACT _____

PHONE CONTACT _____

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Option 1:

PROPOSED PAPER TITLE _____

PAPER ABSTRACT (300 words) _____

Option 2:

WORKING GROUP (THEORY) _____

1st choice _____

2nd choice _____

Option 3:

WORKSHOP (PRACTICE) _____

1st choice _____

2nd choice _____