



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**



BETWEEN THEN AND NOW:

Performing Archives

The Royal Exchange Theatre

23rd June - 24th June

Performance Research Group

Influencing creative developments, public policy, and broader culture through impactful performance research.



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more**

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Tuesday 23rd June

10:00 Keynote

Karen Christopher

Haranczak/Navarre Performance Projects

Nothing compares 2U to the tune of “the agonizingly relevant body of the performer”

‘I will discuss archiving and being archived. I will show something that will never be shown again. I will separate a layer and take a look.

I will consider how the artist, now 10 years gone since the ending of a 20-year commitment to the performance group, returning from across the Atlantic to attend the opening of an archive of the “residual artefacts” of the once fleshed performance works, arrives to a set of decisions made at a distance by people she hardly knows, based on looking at ephemera from which the heart long removed to a grave on a collapsing sea cliff is not heard felt smelt or seen.

This work was finished on each performance night. This work died numerous painless deaths. This work is misremembered and promoted. This work is in the attic. This work is . . . the head of an archivist propped on a pillow and the voice of a writer putting her body into the space of writing.’

Karen Christopher is a collaborative performance maker, performer and teacher. Her company, Haranczak/Navarre Performance Projects, is devoted to collaborative processes, listening for the unnoticed, the almost invisible, and the very quiet, paying attention as an act of social cooperation. Recent works engage with interconnectivity: the entanglement between people and of people with their environments, other living beings, and the vibrant matter with which we interact.

Currently performing: Skywater, Facewater, Underwater Waltz Skywater, a live performance combining movement, text, song, sound and objects to explore flow, adaptation and ways of sensing the world, evoking ideas related to deep sea cultures and the environment. Recently, Always Already, made with Tara Fatehi, is an 8-hour performance installation. Co-edited with Mary Paterson, Entanglements of Two: A Series of Duets is a book of essays focused on the form and practice of working in pairs in 14 different ways by 14 different people.

She was a member of Chicago-based Goat Island performance group for 20 years until they disbanded in 2009. Karen is based in Faversham, Kent. <https://karenchristopher.co.uk/>

10:45 Introduction to Exhibitors

Sara Davis and Jackie Haynes

The Co-Writing Booth: Voicing Archives

The archives at Manchester Art Gallery's Platt Hall function for us as a set of conditions for arts-based research. Working independently and collaboratively, we engage with archival objects, records, systems, the building itself and its community and surroundings, regarding the archive less as a static repository and more as a site for activation and enactment. We are interested in the political ways that embodied and material approaches can challenge archival authority, and how performance can activate archival material differently, unsettling claims of coherence and single truths.

The co-writing booth is a durational collective performance set in a suitably quiet space. Delegates are invited to drop in to observe and write in response to an arrangement of archival material related to Platt Hall, alongside their own reflections arising from the conference. Emerging through shared authorship, delegates are also invited to perform their contributions within a 10-minute plenary summing up the day. In the performance, we collectively voice the situated archive, drawing on our conference context-specific plurality of tone, accent, rhythm and intonation. Through this process we emphasise the written word voiced as a practice for challenging the presumed truth of archival records.

Sara is an artist and lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University's School of Art and Design. Central to her practice is an engagement with embodied experience, combining drawing and photography to explore processes of memory, imagination and belonging. In 2024, Sara completed a PhD that examined migration and diaspora with a focus on the recent Scandinavian migration to the UK. Before this she completed a BA (Hons) from Central Saint Martins. Sara has disseminated her research through conference presentations at national and international levels. She has shown her work in venues such as Paper Gallery, Fact Liverpool, Rogue Project Space, Holden Gallery and Grosvenor Gallery.

<https://sarakristinadavies.co.uk>

Jackie established House of Haynes Fancy Dress Hire in Manchester (1995), completing MA Textiles at MMU (2012) and a practice-based PhD at University of Cumbria (2022) studying the German Dada artist, Kurt Schwitters. Jackie's current artwork features in 'Things of Least' (Manchester Art Gallery) and Women in Print (Allen Bank, Grasmere) as one of the collaborative duo, Artist A & Artist B, with Heather Mullender-Ross. Jackie's art practice combines screen printing, constructed textiles, performance and text, and is a member of Artlab Contemporary Print in Preston.

<https://jackiehaynesartwork.wordpress.com>

Chris Paul Daniels
SODA, Manchester Metropolitan University

Give Yourself a Round of Applause

Give Yourself a Round of Applause, a film by Chris Paul Daniels, explores performance, illusion, the mechanics of storytelling, and how identities are constructed, rehearsed and mythologised.

The film is comprised entirely from material held at the North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University related to theatres, audiences, professional and amateur dramatics, cine societies and performance to camera.

Originally exhibited at Lowry as part of 'Curtain Up' 18th April - 21st June 2026, the work draws on the Lowry's rich history as a portal between fact and fiction.

Dave Evans
Manchester Metropolitan University

Queue Up And Dance

Queue Up And Dance is a multi-part project in collaboration with Sefton Libraries that archives and celebrates Quadrant Park, a short-lived but influential nightclub open during the early 1990's in Bootle, North Liverpool. 'The Quad' influenced the cultural landscape of the region, hosting international DJ's and clubbers from across the UK. It provided the 'superclub' blueprint that was developed into internationally recognised brands such as Cream, which became a significant economic and cultural force regionally, nationally and internationally. Despite all of this, there is a lack of any coherent archive that tells its story and the building was demolished in 1992. Through co-production with a diverse community of people who attended the club, Queue Up And Dance gathered ephemera and oral histories from that time and place to produce a book, an exhibition in Bootle close to the original site, and an online archive. The project considered how established archives, such as Sefton Local Authority Archive Unit, can interface with dispersed, 'unauthorised' archives, such as Facebook Groups, in a way that remains accessible to all and reflects the fluidity of the space and time, while also providing it with security, structure and longevity that these personal or community driven collections often lack.

Dave Evans is an artist based in Liverpool. He makes artworks that explore how sound and voice can be used to represent complex systems, questioning the levels of audibility afforded to different parts of these arrangements. Often working in a site-specific context, Dave has produced work in response to places like demolished nightclubs, train stations, Highland forests and his own home. He currently hosts 'Vocal Systems', a regular show on WGXC in New York, exploring the voice and song beyond language.

11:45 Session One

Adam Walker

Manchester Metropolitan University

Textual Actants (Infrastructure): Archival Writing-Navigating

'This paper critically reflects on archival aspects within my art-writing-as-practice book Textual Actants (Infrastructure), which comes out in May 2026 with specialist art writing press Ma Bibliothèque.

Textual Actants brings together research undertaken with several forms of archive. This includes 'conventional' archives, such as Stanford University Library's Silicon Valley Archive, in which I undertook research into the beginnings of on-screen digital text manipulation. It also includes the physical environment as sedimented archive: the post-industrial anthropo-landscapes of former steelworks, and their re-cladding into speculative investment opportunities.

A third prominent archive is an archive of self. Textual Actants revisits formerly frequented places, attending to the physical legacies of sites and events remembered, and (and as) the self which has emerged through these.

Adopting a bricolage-like method – cutting across and between these different registers of archive – Textual Actants echoes Derrida, each trace is ever receding, always the trace of another; origin recedes as myth.

This paper reflects on this meta-archival interplay, proposing it as a process of navigation-performance. Textual Actants itself becomes a new archive of sorts: a particular setting down in now-fixed text of a subjective, contingent route through the multiple archives which have been explored. Who is permitted to write the archive, I ask, and how to uphold its plural fluidities amid increasing claims of rigid certainty and authority?'

Adam Walker is a writer, artist and academic. Their practice is research-led, critically and reflexively considering structures of inequality, not least their own complicit position amid these. Text lies at the centre of their practice, including its extensions into digital terrains as code and data. Interruption and impropriety are sought: subtexts and counter-texts that interrupt dominant textual flows. The works are sometimes written; other times they spill into performance, moving-image and digital forms, and have been exhibited, performed, published, and commissioned by institutions including the Serpentine, ICA, Tate, and Tyneside Cinema.

Their latest book Textual Actants (Infrastructure) was published in 2026 by Ma Bibliothèque. Their previous book Art, Labour, Text and Radical Care was published in 2023 by Routledge.

They are a Lecturer in Fine Art at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Beth Potter
King's College London

Circus as Imperial Archive

Drawing on André Lepecki's concept of the 'incorporation' and 'excorporation' of performance, as well as theories of the body in the emergent field of circus studies, in this paper I posit the post-1945 British circus as an embodied archive of empire.

The Victorian circus - with its re-enactment of imperial battles in military spectacles, its acquisition of exotic animals from colonised lands, and its close genealogical and entrepreneurial connections to practices of human display - was an imperial mode of performance, indebted to the infrastructural networks and cultural/ideological apparatuses of the British imperial project. Using previously unreleased material from the BBC Archives and the National Fairground and Circus Archive, this paper explores how circus became a (re-performing, reactivating) repository of imperial narratives, logics, and imaginaries, even while the British empire was becoming a weakened hegemony in legal and governmental terms.

I particularly emphasise theories of the archival body as an alternative to, and expansion upon, the 'bundle of silences' (Michel-Rolph Trouillot) of institutional archives; and I suggest that in this sliver of circus-televisual history, attending to embodied epistemologies has assumed greater urgency in the light of the BBC's recent decision to dramatically restrict access to its written archives.

'I am an interdisciplinary researcher working between cultural history and performance studies. I recently completed my AHRC-funded PhD at King's College London, where I wrote about the ways circus and its broadcast iterations performed empire in post-1945 Britain, as the nation at once withdrew from but also reasserted influence over its colonial possessions. I currently work as a curator for an academic publisher; concurrently I am developing my post-doctoral research project, on the entanglements between Britain's entertainment and defence industries. From October 2026, I will be a Fellow in the Humanities at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart.'

Lauren Nicole Whitter
Anansi Theatre Company C.I.C

Between Stories: Anansi, Practice, and the Living Archive

This roundtable explores how performance practice can function as a living archive, focusing on my work as an artist, lecturer, and theatre maker developing Anansi-led storytelling across performance, education, and community contexts.

Rather than treating the archive as a fixed repository of past material, I am interested in how stories move, shift, and re-emerge through embodied practice, oral storytelling, and participatory performance. The Anansi storytelling tradition, rooted in diasporic cultural memory, offers a way of thinking about knowledge that is carried through repetition, adaptation, and retelling rather than preservation alone.

This discussion considers how practice-led work can operate as archival activation, where performance becomes a method of holding, reshaping, and transmitting cultural memory in real time. It also reflects on how artists working across freelance, organisational, and educational contexts navigate authorship, documentation, and legacy while maintaining fluid and evolving practices.

The roundtable invites conversation around how performance can resist closure, remaining in motion between then and now. It asks what it means for practice itself to become archive, and how storytelling can act as both method and memory across shifting institutional and community spaces.

Lauren Nicole Whitter is a theatre maker, movement practitioner, lecturer and the Founder and Artistic Director of Anansi Theatre Company, a Derby-based anti-racist theatre company creating work by, with and for women and girls of colour. Her practice explores storytelling, cultural memory, heritage, movement and social justice through performance, participation and community engagement. Alongside her work with Anansi, Lauren teaches in higher education and supports artists and communities through creative learning, leadership and facilitation. She is interested in how stories are carried, embodied, adapted and preserved through practice, performance and collective memory.

14:00 Session Two
Brigid McLeer
Manchester Metropolitan University

Otherwise An Archive

I would like to propose a presentation that will discuss my current practice-based research working with reproductions of the body of paintings produced by Edouard Vuillard between 1890 - 1900. These paintings of densely patterned almost claustrophobic interiors predominantly depict Vuillards' mother and sister working as seamstresses in their Paris apartment. They are intimate, domestic, decorative and highly sensual works. And to me they constitute an archive of images of a particular kind of private, female, domestic working space; a space perhaps rarely so assiduously looked upon or documented. As such they are an archive of trapped subjectivities who nonetheless contain the forces of their own empowering knowledge - of the body, materials, each other. My work seeks to tap into these forces and release them afresh.

To do this I have been beginning to 'perform' this archive in different ways through my recent research practice. I consider this an act of rescue and reanimation. I have been doing this in spatial and formal ways and as actual movement performance experimentation in collaboration with colleagues at MMU and others. I would like to share some of these experiments in rescue and reanimation with the conference.

This work sits within a broader research interest I have in the action or performative potential of images (particularly historic images or images from the past). I will also speak briefly about this and the 'an-archic' method I use to catalyse this potential.

Dr. Brigid McLeer is an Irish artist, researcher and academic based in the UK living and working between London and Manchester. She has a multi-media and cross-disciplinary practice that includes live and recorded performance and installation, sculpture, video, drawing, writing, and collage. Her work is concerned with contingency and the relational, in material, aesthetic and ethico-political terms and is generated in response to pre-existing, sometimes historic, starting points. The work has been disseminated internationally through exhibitions, publications, events and conference presentations. She is currently Senior Lecturer (0.5) in Fine Art at Manchester Metropolitan University.
www.brigidmcleer.com

Jenny Baines

Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University

About the Circle: from Imagined Archives of Karla Grosch. Practice-research Examining the Archives of Karla Grosch (1904-1933)

For Performing Archives, I propose a performative work-in-progress, About the Circle. This stems from early research into the archives of Karla Grosch, a dancer trained under Gret Palucca, and gymnastics instructor of women studying at Bauhaus School (1928 – 1932). During this period, she also performed dances devised by Oskar Schlemmer, most notably Metalltanz and Glastanz, both performed in the production Materialtänze at Volksbühne Berlin in 1929.

Documentation on Grosch, held in the Palucca Archiv at Akademie Der Künste and in Bauhaus Dessau, is a catalyst for this research project, which will lead to a new series of performative works reenacting and reimagining the archives. The archives contain letters, essays, photographs of Grosch performing and of her teaching others to perform specific movements. Much of the archive, particularly from the Palucca School in Dresden, where she trained, was destroyed in WWII. So, through exploring the various images and documents I am also imagining what these gaps may hold.

About the Circle will take form as audio-visual performative work-in-progress, using Grosch's essay Über den Kreis (About the Circle, 1927) as a starting point for drawing together some of the material sourced on Grosch's conceptual thinking, teaching and performance.

Meriel Price and Johann-Michael Schneider

Royal Northern College of Music and Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University

Aside From The

***Aside** create contemporary music theatre, working within the space that opens between what is intended and the outcome, between expectation, disappointment and fulfilment.*

***Aside** examines performance in all its forms, whether on stage or in everyday life.*

***Aside** (Meriel Price and Johann-Michael Schneider) have been performing together for the last 60 years and have generated an enormous archive of material that largely remains dormant in vast, underground stores in Berlin.*

*They draw their material from that which is unintended, private, uncontrolled, uncomfortable, accidental, and mistaken. **Aside** enlarges and transforms this material, focussing on that which normally would be ignored or attempted to be hidden. **Aside** thereby blurs the boundaries between performance and composition, sophistication and diversion.*

***Aside** examines, deconstructs and challenges the expectations of each specific audience found in each specific venue.*

*They draw their material from that which is unintended, private, uncontrolled, uncomfortable, accidental, and mistaken. **Aside** enlarges and*

<https://asidefromthe.com/>

Meriel Price is a transdisciplinary artist, composer, saxophonist and actor, creating works that span visual art, music and theatre. Solo exhibitions include *Staring at the Bin* at Museum Tinguely, Basel, Munich Biennale, BAM! Berlin Festival and Santa Mònica, Barcelona. As an actor/saxophonist she performs in *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* (MIF, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Southbank Centre, Park Avenue Armory, New York). She also performs with the Berlin Philharmonic and BBC Philharmonic Orchestras a.o. Her PhD (Royal Northern College of Music and

Manchester School of Art) investigates nuances of the art-life relationship, developing a practice that encompasses the music, theatre and visual art of everyday life.

<https://merielprice.com/>

Johann-Michael Schneider is an actor, director and violinist and has worked at theatres such as Theater Dortmund, Friedrichstadtpalast Berlin, Staatstheater Meiningen, Theater Bielefeld, Theater Reutlingen and Metropol-Theater Munich.

He has written music for theatre for works such as “The Damned” by L. Visconti, “The Imaginary Invalid” by Molière, and “Woyzeck” by G. Büchner, at theatres such as Staatstheater Oldenburg, Schloßtheater Celle and Schloßtheater Moers. He is the musical director of Theater Reutlingen since 2007. He studied violin at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz, Cologne and German Language and Literature and Philosophy at the University of Göttingen.

<https://www.johann-michael-schneider.de/>

15:45 Session Three

Alexander Kelly

Voyager 3 / Leeds Beckett University

The Thin Places: Performance as Archive Curation

I am currently collecting stories of thin places. I’m talking to people who have experience of them, directly or through having heard stories of them. I’m travelling to them and researching their history. I’m creating a performance in which the audience gather around a hand drawn map of our islands, on to which the locations of these thin places are marked. The audience can request stories that are already located on the map, or contribute their own. Through conversation and storytelling, the ‘show’ curates a new archive within and existing folk tradition.

Voyager 3’s The Thin Places (2026-) has grown out of my practice with theatre company Third Angel (1995-2023). Shows such as Inspiration Exchange (2010-2023), The Desire Paths (2016-2022) and Story Map (2010-2014) were built around performance mechanisms designed to create an archive in collaboration with the audience – those at the time, and those at previous iterations of the show.

Reflecting on this recently, I have understood that this archive exists both in my memory and notebooks, and also in the memories of the people who contributed and heard stories as participants. A dispersed archive, both growing and fading within collective memory.

Alexander Kelly is a theatre & games maker, writer, performer and mentor. Since 2023 he has been working under the name Voyager 3, making projects that connect the territories of theatre, games, conversation, installation and digital media. Current projects include *The Investigations*, a participatory theatre devising kit/game; *The Thin Places*, a story-swapping research project; and *Dolphin Philosophy*, talk/chapter in *Theatre About Science: Performing & Communicating* (Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2026).

From 1995–2023 Alex was Co-Artistic Director of Sheffield-based theatre company Third Angel, which toured extensively throughout the UK and internationally. He is a serial collaborator and an experienced educator, and regularly mentors other artists. He has a PhD in autobiographical and documentary theatre, and is Reader in Theatre & Performance at Leeds Beckett University.

Graham Clayton-Chance

Independent Artist

Transmission: Instinct and Improvisation in Performing Nigel Charnock's Archive

This presentation reflects on my personal experience of creating the private archive of UK performer and dancer Nigel Charnock following his death in 2012. A fiercely independent queer artist who had not archived his work in his lifetime, I will speak — as his close friend and collaborator — of feeling my way into what it means to hold, and then activate, an archive.

Whilst grieving his loss, I understood the necessity of not losing him entirely. I began collecting Nigel's notebooks, video documentation, and choreographic and text-based work from two rooms and a loft in his house. The most spectacular discovery was the volumes of notebooks: years of notes, shorthand prompts for workshops, and techniques for his partly improvised solo performances and for the ensemble work he made using the same methods. From these prompts, I will discuss the evolution of the archive — from restaging work with National Dance Company Wales and Laban, to a series of looser collaborations with new artists. Together, these approaches frame the archive as embodied, unfinished, continually re-authored through practice — and, inevitably, improvised.

The talk is accompanied by photographs of the notebooks and documentation of the archive's activations across teaching, restaging, and residency practice.

Graham Clayton-Chance (UK) studied Drama at the University of Manchester and has worked across theatre, installation and film. His film, performance and installation projects have been presented at the National Review of Live Art, Tramway, Arnolfini, The Kitchen and the Edinburgh International Festival. Since 2012, he has been constructing the archive of British choreographer and DV8 co-founder Nigel Charnock, drawing on his personal relationship with the artist to explore the mutable boundaries between collector and archive, grief and memory, artefact and lived experience. In 2025 collaborative film work with artist mandla was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art for its Media and Performance Collection.

Gillian Dyson

Leeds Beckett University

Body of Work

In 2014 I (re)performed a 1996 work, 'Lines of Desire'. Here, I consider the possibilities of 'active archiving' (Griffiths 2013:184), knowledge gained through 'being in the work' (Merleau-Ponty 1969:96). I reflect on my original political, spatial performance intentions. I consider 'presence' relating to navigation of the archival or legacy (Schneider 2011:4, and Romms 2013:40) and on a palimpsest of re-iteration troubling the ephemeral fragmentation of performance (Phelan 1993: 146) through the aging body as document: how/why/ should I re-perform?

Gillian Dyson is a Yorkshire-based solo and collaborative artist and academic. Recent performance/ exhibition includes the International Forum of Performance, Dráma, Greece, 2024; collaborative online performance for 'Together Elsewhere': Performance Art Network Switzerland, Performance Art Bergan, 2025; and with the Parlour Collective, at the prestigious Kone Foundation/Saari Residence in Mynämäki, Finland 2025. Dyson was project curator for the historic Hull Time Based Arts and has been involved with a number of artist-led initiatives, currently with fledgling ANSWER

performance collective in Leeds. Dyson is Senior Lecturer in Performing Arts, Leeds Beckett University, with a PhD from University of Glasgow. Her research interests include the (un)homely, sense of place, gender and aging.

17:10 Session Four

Peader Kirk

Manchester Metropolitan University

The Visibility of Possibility II

A performance lecture envisaging the now shut greenroom venue on Whitworth Street West in Manchester (1987-2011) as a heterotopic space in Foucault's sense of an actual but necessarily short lived utopia. Artist Martin Gent recognised greenroom as 'a catalyst for performance art to thrive in the UK' (Gent, 2024)

Combining archival recordings of artists and audiences from the now no longer accessible "greenroom utd" project with lo-fi re-enactments of key greenroom performances and music from club nights at the bar. This lecture performance looks to communities of learning and communities of taste to consider the lasting impact of greenroom's programming aesthetic and its artist development methodologies.

This presentation draws on Pearson and Shanks re-conception of performance heterotopias in 'Theatre/Archaeology' (2001), argues for the importunate of artists from diverse or economically challenged backgrounds seeing people like themselves in work at arts venues (McKinney and Tomlin, 2020) and has some epic bass lines in play.

Claire Hind

York St John University

There's Cosmic Dust in your Hair, Love

'In June 2000 I witnessed The Wooster Group perform House/Lights in Tramway, Glasgow. Kate Valk's performance of Faustus/Elaine had a profound effect on how I made and presented performance work after that. Valk's delivery particularly her voice was haunting. When writing new work, I would imagine Valk performing the words I had scored in scripts such as Ghost Track (2012), Dream Yards (2013), Five Dead Acts Five Dead Cats (2015), Lost in a Sea of Glass and Tin (2019), Field Recordings (2023), Maya Deren Supernova (2025), Falling Into (2025) and live performances of electronic dance poetry with The Long Dead Stars (2026). This imagining was a kind of embodied acknowledgement more than a form of mimicry, it is attached to a multiple as if experience of playing at playing through the practice of ghosting (Hind & Winters, 2020). Yet, I have never directly portrayed the figures Valk narrated in House/Lights, rather I did play homage to her casual pose with a microphone, which is a form of delivery I play with. In performance practice "ghosts sit somewhere between our desire to embody an actor's previous performance and our attitude toward the experience of that first performance" (Ibid, 2020).

I propose a 15 minute sharing of a work in the making - There's Cosmic Dust in your Hair, Love that addresses the uncanny residue between then and now, where the now addresses my research practice into cosmic rays and dark matter and the then, which exists out there, in space time.'

Daniel Tierney

Manchester Metropolitan University & University of Lancashire

Stage/Prompt: An Investigation into the Universe of Mean Images

The proposed contribution presents research related to performance and the networked image by investigating systems of machine-learning (AI) through a series of visually staged prompts. Following a brief introduction into the concepts behind the research within the context of performance documentation, a series of staged tableaux (2 or 3) drawn from the archive of performance art will be re-performed live by conference participants. These re-performances will be documented as still images, that will form visual prompts used to 'test the system' via Chat GPT or similar AI application.

This research draws on the prescience of Vilem Flusser's (1980) technical images and contemporary debates regarding the networked image and the internet archive. The research explores the form and site of the digitally distributed image, increasingly subsumed into the apparatus of machine-learning and generative AI. The apparatus functions to create what Hito Steyerl (2023) has termed the 'mean' image - an amalgam of reference points that predict and (re)produce patterns, converging 'around the average, the median; hallucinated mediocrity.'

The process and accompanying prompts will 'test' the ability of the apparatus to recognise and reproduce historical performance art events, while asking questions regarding the nature of the image within networked and generative processes.

Flusser, V. (2011) Into the universe of technical images. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Steyerl, H. (2023) 'Mean Images', New Left Review, 140/141, pp. 82–97. Available at: <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii140/articles/hito-steyerl-mean-images> (Accessed: 24th April 2026).

Wednesday 24th June

9:45 Session Five

Stella Godmet

Doctorate of Philosophy by Practice as Research in Drama from Canterbury Christ Church University

The Body: Archive of Emotions. How can performance allow unrecognized narratives to emerge and become part of collective memory?

In her 1933, Mes Mémoires, Jane Avril recollects the time she spent as one of psychiatrist, Jean-Martin Charcot's, female patients at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. She describes fellow patients' behaviour, "... there were these crazy girls whose illness, called hysteria, consisted mainly of simulating (...) to attract attention and win the spotlight" (1933, p.14). Her written testimony appears to echo Charcot's dehumanizing diagnosis of female patients.

Once discharged from the Salpêtrière, Jane Avril became Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's muse. Portrayed dancing the Cancan at the Moulin Rouge in many of his paintings, she soon gained public notoriety.

Thus, following her experience at the Salpêtrière, Jane Avril took ownership of the symptoms of hysteria in order to shape her own empowering and liberating dance through the re-appropriation of her body.

The distorted and spectacular actions which composed her dances were moved by an animalistic, untamed energy which owed her the sobriquet 'Jeanne la Folle' (Crazy Jane).

Jane Avril's own apparent contradictions reveal the complexity of drawing information from written archives which comply with familiar patriarchal social structures.

In this paper and performance, I will look at how performances which are informed by archival material, can allow unrecognized narratives to be made visible.

Through her practice-based research, **Dr. Stella Godmet** explores, using madness as methodology in theatre practice to deconstruct victimising female narratives and find new ways of staging them. Her creative work includes playwriting, devising, and performance, her career trajectory evidences over a decade of engagement with storytelling as a means to comprehend and respond to the treatment of what was perceived of as female 'madness' in society. She is experienced in working independently as well as with a team and her own company, Fleet of Feet theatre, to navigate the adaptation of historical events and social issues for public performance.

Alexis Maxwell

The Archive Under Observation

This performative presentation uses animation to explore how patterns of practice are identified within performance archives. Working with the archive of Reckless Sleepers, it focuses on the recurrence of visual motifs across the company's documentation, using recordings, photographs, and graphic notations to trace what repeats over time.

The presentation centres on the researcher's positionality, using the observer effect as a framework for understanding how the act of looking shapes what is seen. As patterns begin to take form, it becomes unclear whether they belong to the material itself or are shaped through the process of reading it. The work suggests that patterns are co-produced through the interaction between material and observer, raising questions about how archival material is translated and how ways of looking shape what is carried forward. Rather than offering a fixed answer, the presentation keeps this question open, using animation to stage the process of pattern-finding and inviting the audience into that uncertainty.

Riham Isaac

University of Exeter

The Palestinian Archive as Embodied Practice: A Living Album

How has Palestinian land been historically portrayed by those witnessing violence and land injustice? Can our work with Palestinian archives today have an emotional, material, communal, or political impact that offers a 'newness' to the wider public? How do we move from individual embodied practice to collective action?

Our present moment in Palestine is characterised by profound loss, destruction, and displacement — an urgent period of crisis and mobilisation. This project positions the archive as a tool for mobilisation rooted in cultural memory and land-based struggle. It questions how archival materials can be re-engaged through performance to reclaim narrative and activate solidarity.

My practice-based research explores these questions through archival assembly, which I refer to as 'digging'. My current investigation centres on Palestinian archives of art, resistance, and land-liberation movements from the 1960s to the 1990s. I collect posters, paintings, songs, films, and

other visual materials from open collections and digital archives on Palestine, assembling them into a living album titled Palestinian Archive in Fluxus / أرشيف فلسطين التحرري الحركي.

In this presentation, I will demonstrate the physical album, showing selected pages and brief video documentation of its activation. The album functions as a working document, always evolving. The presence and tactile nature of handwritten notes, images, and tasks offer a tangible counterpoint to digital activism, reclaiming slowness and embodied attention as forms of resistance. The archive becomes both protest and portal, inviting shared acts of resistance and imaginative world-building.

11:30 Session Six

Patrizia Marra

Sapienza University of Rome – University Suor Orsola Benincasa of Naples;
National Research Council of Italy, Institute of Heritage Science

Novel Approaches to Archival Documents from Italian Early Cinema to the Re-enactment of Silent Antiquity

This paper investigates the performative reactivation potential of archival sources from Italian silent cinema at the intersection of historical imagination, scholarly reconstruction, and museum and exhibition practices. Based on research conducted at the historical archives of Italian film libraries, the project examines film stills and production photographs alongside working notes, scripts and research materials related to early 20th-century Italian films that staged the ancient world. These heterogeneous traces – often incomplete and stored in different archive facilities – encourage a performative mode of engagement.

The transdisciplinary breadth of the approach draws on methods from archaeology and iconology, as well as museography and film studies. It allows for a reinterpretation and critical re-embodiment of the cinematographic archival sources, often scarcely studied, if not completely unedited. Working with these documents is a performance in itself, since it demands exposing the tensions between accuracy and invention, presence and loss, memory and fabrication.

The aim of the paper is then to propose a methodology for working with film archives and, by focusing on the visual grammars of antiquity developed within and through silent cinema, to reanimate them to produce new narratives, new readings, and new forms of scholarly and museographic activation.

Patrizia Marra is a PhD Candidate in the Italian National PhD Program in Heritage Science (40th cycle) at the Department of Ancient World Studies, Sapienza University of Rome, supported by a CNR–ISPC scholarship. Her research examines the relationship between archaeology and silent cinema. She holds a Third-level Specialisation Diploma in Archaeological Heritage, an MA in Cultural Heritage Studies from University College London, and a Master's degree in Skeletal Anthropology, Forensics, and Paleopathology. She has collaborated on research and excavation projects in Italy and Lebanon, curated several archaeological exhibitions, and contributed to scientific catalogues.

Mahsa Sheydani
Loughborough University

Dancing as Performing Mourning, Mourning as Archive: Reclaiming Body and History Under Erasure and Control

How can forbidden, ephemeral gestures function as performing the archive under erasure and control? Following the January 2026 protests in Iran for freedom against Iran's regime, emerged mourning practices in which the funerary rituals transformed into collective acts of defiance. In a significant rupture from established official mourning norms, mourners introduced dancing, live music and wedding-like ceremonies into 40th-day memorial rituals. Dancing and playing live music/singing are not encouraged under the Iran's current regime and are prohibited practices if performed by women.

They also are considered uncommon cultural practices within the contemporary Iranian mourning contexts. These actions, sustained by mourners/protesters through collective participation/repetition under the risk of the regime's lethal violence, attempt to reclaim erased Iranian narratives and identities. Here, participants become performers(re-performers), acting as agents of embodied transmission. In this context, performance operates as political defiance and psychosomatic care and enables Iranian communities to retrieve their overwritten histories, carving them into a living archive that continues via constant re-performing and ephemerality. Drawing on Diana Taylor's articulation and distinction between the archive and the repertoire (2003), I argue that dancing as mourning under control reconfigures it as a performative site of archiving/counter-archiving that sustains memory through repetition that resists erasure.

Frances Babbage and Michael Pinchbeck
University of Sheffield and Manchester Metropolitan University

Questions of Ephemerality: Theatre correspondence and the John Berger Archive

*John Berger's fiction, sociological writing, essays, screenplays and criticism have received considerable scholarly attention, but his work for and interest in performance remain largely unknown. A keen theatregoer, he became increasingly drawn to the medium, writing to friend and Berger scholar Geoff Dyer in the late 1980s: 'Apart from finishing [Into Their Labours] what I'd most like to do is write for the theatre.' Berger was especially excited by the stage's liveness, where the voice 'suddenly becomes flesh, visible, and through that becomes palpable to the public'; the 'intensity' generated was 'worth all the ephemerality'.^[1] While Berger's two plays co-authored with Nella Bielski – *A Question of Geography* (1987) and *Goya's Last Portrait* (1989) – had limited success, his relationship with theatre extends beyond this to include innovative, co-created performances in which he also performed, as well as a vast body of adaptations by others, sometimes made with Berger's direct involvement and elsewhere in dialogue but at a distance. To date, only his collaborations with Simon McBurney and Complicite are generally known.*

Berger's work with Complicite is the tip of the iceberg. The Berger Archive, at the British Library, documents more than 50 theatrical adaptations of his work as well as many more proposed that did not ultimately see the light of day. Artists from across Europe and North and South America sought permission to adapt not just his fiction but his sociological texts, art criticism and reflective essays. These somewhat unexpected sources resulted in performances that were equally unconventional, whether staged in galleries and museums, warehouses, the London underground, a squat, in a Welsh barn with live farm animals, or on the slopes of the French Alps.

This paper charts Pinchbeck and Babbage's work to uncover this history. That journey has included new creative practice – notably, a trilogy of performances by Pinchbeck inspired by Berger and Mohr's co-authored books – combined with traditional archival research. Our discussion concentrates especially on those surviving traces, reflecting on what we discovered in the archive as well as what remained unknown or elusive. Researching past performance poses

distinct challenges, most obviously the 'ephemerality' to which Berger referred and the partiality of documents that remain. We address issues of presence and absence not only regarding the performance medium and nature of archival holdings, but as a persistent tension in Berger's writing, interrogating questions of immediacy, memory and representation. This contribution is structured as a correspondence: in using this form, the paper reflects our collaborative process and simultaneously reenacts the dialogic mode to which Berger was so often drawn.

[1] 'Tenderness and Truth.' Berger in conversation with Geoff Dyer, unpublished (late 1980s, undated). John Berger Archive, British Library, Add MS 88964/8/27.

Frances Babbage is Professor of Theatre and Performance at the University of Sheffield. Her research has often been conducted through creative practice (as performer and as writer/dramaturg) in tandem with more traditional modes of study. Her publications in the field of adaptation and rewriting include *Adaptation in Contemporary Theatre: Performing Literature* (Bloomsbury, 2018) and *Re-Visioning Myth: Modern and Contemporary Drama by Women* (Manchester UP, 2011). She is currently working with Michael Pinchbeck on a co-authored book, *Ways of Staging: The Berger & Mohr Trilogy*, for Intellect's Playtext Series.

Michael Pinchbeck is Professor of Theatre and co-lead for the Performance Research Group at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. He is a writer and theatre maker based in Nottingham and has toured extensively, nationally and internationally. His research explores dramaturgy, scores, practice-as-research and the performance of commemoration. He is currently co-authoring a book about John Berger and the theatre for Intellect's Playtext Series with Professor Frances Babbage (University of Sheffield). *Ways of Staging: The Berger and Mohr Trilogy* reflects on Berger's relationship to theatre and collaboration.

13:45 Session Seven

Ben White and Eileen Simpson
Manchester Metropolitan University

Open Music Archive - Copying and Abundance: Future orientated approaches to collaboratively generated and distributed multi-format artworks.

This audio-visual lecture-performance explores Open Music Archive, an ongoing collaborative project by artists Eileen Simpson and Ben White to source, distribute, and reanimate out-of-copyright sound, music and film. It features a playlist assembled from archival clips, project documentation, and moving-image work drawn from two decades of archival practice. Through replay, the lecture performs the argument it makes — that public domain materials are not exhausted by use but continue to generate new meaning through repetition and reperformance.

At a moment when AI systems are increasingly consuming cultural memory without attribution or trace, the question of what it means to actively maintain, replenish, and perform an archive has become newly urgent. Central to the practice of Open Music Archive is the archive as generative. Critic Ellen Mara De Wachter describes Open Music Archive as maintaining "the integrity of what it produced in the past as a potential constituent part of everything that will be made from it in the future." Against the extractive logic of platform economies and AI, which mine the commons without replenishing it, Open Music Archive proposes an alternative archival intelligence: a speculative, collaborative, future-facing archival practice, in which commoning, peer-to-peer distribution, and free reuse celebrate interdependence and renewal.

Dr Clara Hamer and Dr Paola Botham
Birmingham City University

Reimagining the Archive: A Collaboration between Documentary Theatre and Performative Photography

This paper examines the ethnographically informed interdisciplinary project 'Between Reality, Farce and Dystopia: Artists' Experiences at Times of Political Extremism in South America', an ongoing collaboration between Paola Botham (Theatre Studies) and Carla Hamer (Photography and Performance). The project combines documentary drama and performative photography to examine how students of artistic disciplines in Argentina and Chile are responding to the rise of the radical right and the current climate of socio-political polarisation in both countries. Focusing on a pilot conducted in Buenos Aires in 2025 through a series of workshops with art students and emerging artists, the article reflects on the use of archival documents as part of the project's methodology, which is informed by decolonial theory and rooted in the participants' own knowledge and experience. Drawing on Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's (2019) argument that photographs, objects, and documents are not standalone or neutral, but rather embedded within the contexts and communities that produced them, workshop participants were invited to connect with archival photographs and documents from their different perspectives as first-, second-, or third-generation witnesses to the events depicted. Through the workshops, archives were activated, re-written, and re-imagined through collective acts of photographing, performing, and documenting—connecting material, digital, and embodied approaches, or the archive and the repertoire in Diana Taylor's (2003) terms. These processes revealed distinct interpretative narratives, forming chains of stories through re-enactment, oral narration, and the creation of new images linked by temporal juxtaposition. We conclude that the simultaneous acts of capture and release, translation, and transformation of archival records and cultural memory re-signified seemingly isolated histories while reinscribing our calls for rights and justice at a time when the arts are facing significant challenges.

References:

Azoulay, A. A. (2019) Potential history unlearning imperialism. London: Verso.

Taylor, D. (2003) The archive and the repertoire: Performing cultural memory in the Americas. Durham: Duke University Press.

Dr Carla Hamer is an artist, researcher and Senior Lecturer in Photography based in the Department of English and Media at Birmingham City University. Her interdisciplinary research connects photography, performance and ethnography, centring on the intersections between performative photography, performativity and affect. Her doctoral thesis, 'Photographic Encounters: A Performative Framework for Practice-Led Ethnographically Informed Research' interrogated the ethical challenges and potential of performative photographic approaches in mediating and accounting for artistic research informed by ethnographic models. Carla is a member of IFTR's Interdisciplinary Performative Pedagogies working group.

Dr Paola Botham (née Sotomayor) is Senior Lecturer in Drama at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham City University, UK. Her research focuses on political theatre practices in Britain and internationally, particularly in the Southern Cone. She has published extensively in this area, including articles on verbatim, tribunal and testimonial plays in Britain and Chile. She co-edited the volume *World Political Theatre and Performance: Theories, Histories, Practices* (Brill, 2020) and

currently co-convenes the working group Interdisciplinary Performative Pedagogies at the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR).

Stephen Scott-Bottoms
University of Manchester

Dear Daisy: Performing the Personal Archive

Dear Daisy is a short play featuring three voices. It is best staged as a reading on mic, with accompanying slides. The piece dramatizes a collection of letters by a notorious but now deceased British criminal, written from prison to a single recipient - who stored them away in a private archive. Each handwritten letter is asterisked with statements specifying that they are strictly private, not for publication. Yet their recipient was a journalist, and the letters are preoccupied with the prisoner's concern to improve their public image. So were the textual protests of privacy merely 'performative'? And what does it mean, now, to make the contents of these letters public?

As Oscar Wilde acknowledged in De Profundis – his long, harrowing letter from Reading Gaol – a prisoner who writes to an audience beyond the prison's walls is inevitably staging a performance of self, in absentia. By turning correspondence into a play, I have sought to literalize that dynamic. By placing the prisoner in dialogue with other, imagined voices, I have also provided counterpoint and historical context. Dear Daisy is a creative response to, and critical interrogation of, the prisoner's words, which leaves audiences to resolve the thorniest questions for themselves.

Performers: Ruby Dawtry, Frankie Franklin, Millie Hampson-May

Content warning: this presentation contains references to historic crimes of violence involving children.

Steve Scott-Bottoms is Professor of Contemporary Theatre and Performance at the University of Manchester. His most recent book is *Incarceration Games: A History of Role-Play in Psychology, Prisons, and Performance* (University of Michigan Press, 2024). He has collaborated in print with artists including Penny Arcade, Tim Crouch, Goat Island, and Diane Torr. As a practitioner, Steve is Storyteller-in-Chief for the social enterprise Vesper Hill, and a Creative Associate of Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission.

15:45 Keynote

Matthew Spangler
San José State University, California

Operation Ajax: Performing from the National Security Archive

*In August 1953, the newly formed CIA, with the help of MI6 and a handful of local supporters, launched a coup against Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh. U.S. and British relations with Iran have never been the same. Today, the National Security Archive in Washington D.C. houses the world's foremost collection of declassified CIA and State Department documents and communication pertaining to the coup. Playwright Matthew Spangler (*The Kite Runner*, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*) will discuss his play *Operation Ajax*, co-written with actor and writer Farshad Farahat, which dramatizes some of this archival material. Taking the view that an archive is, itself, a performance marking ephemerality, disappearance, and a number of constitutive acts, this presentation will examine how the National Security Archive informed the play's treatment of conflict, character, and politics. It will also include a brief reading from select scenes.*

Dr. Matthew Spangler is Professor of Performance Studies and Director of the School of Film, Theatre, and Dance at San José State University in California. His research examines the representation of refugees and asylum-seekers through the literary and performing arts. His publications on this topic have appeared in many journals, including *The James Joyce Quarterly*, *Text and Performance Quarterly*, *Theatre Journal*, and *The New Hibernia Review*. He is the co-editor of *The Playboy of the Western World – A New Version* (Syracuse University Press, 2024) and *Staging Intercultural Ireland* (Cork University Press, 2014).

Matthew is also an award-winning playwright. His plays have been produced in London's West End, on Broadway, off-Broadway, at the Kennedy Center, Dublin Theatre Festival, Avignon Theatre Festival, Tunisia's Theatre Days, Dubai Opera House, and at many other theatres around the world. Plays include: *The Kite Runner*, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, *Operation Ajax*, *Kingdom of Cards*, and *Cowboys and East Indians*, among others.