



PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

EDITORIAL, *PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY* VOL. 10 NO. 1

DIANA DAMIAN MARTIN ROYAL CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA
EVE KATSOURAKI UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND
THERON SCHMIDT UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

Welcome to the first of a two-part open volume of Performance Philosophy.

Three years ago, when drafting our editorial for a previous open issue (Cull Ó Maoilearca et al. 2022), we spoke about the energies and paradoxes of ‘open’, as they resonate with performance philosophy as a still emerging, interdisciplinary field of creative and critical practice. Over these three years—as the world continues to unfold, collapse, regather, witness—we remain committed to holding the tethers between performance and philosophy *open*. Performance Philosophy’s own fluidity, its movements across, make it a welcoming space for performing thinking and thinking as performance, in the thickness of the many nows that shape our experiences. What does it mean to open a field? How does one practice openness in the midst of conflict, genocide, precarity, but also resistance, imagination, hope? When power itself is unstable, what interstices make themselves felt and seen? How does an open issue perform the multiple temporalities of the now? How do we *feel* the atmospheres of this now? How does openness feel? What is its temperature?

In this first of our two-part open volume, we rehearse openness through placing in relation a diverse span of field orientations, traversing sense-making, initiation rituals, dramaturgy, musicology, temporality, and somatics. Much of what is hosted in this first volume is underpinned by experiences of time and temporality—as contributor Sarah Fine suggests, sometimes, a moment emerges, in the midst of it all, that wills something into being. This issue too, has its own temporalities.

For this iteration and moving forward, [Margins]—our section dedicated to creative and non-standard approaches to the manifold relations that arise at the conjunction between performance and philosophy—is no longer a separate section but is integrated into the journal. This will enable us to invite, and hold space for, the many ways in which form acts as a site of inquiry and research across the journal, and pay attention to the dramaturgies that can emerge in relation to each volume and issue.

A number of [Margins] articles in this issue tend to questions of sense-making, turning to the interstices between languages, feelings, and performance by thinking as and through the play as a theatrical form. In ‘Philosophy with All the Feels’, Sarah Fine probes at actions, process, philosophies, and politics of *willing*. In this piece, the lecture becomes process, encounter, and event as it moves us through theatrical markers, like an audience, or a ‘work’, towards reflections on the imperatives of willing in the midst of turbulence. In this performance lecture, Fine sets out an invitation to explore how we facilitate and hold spaces of wonder and openness in relation to the matters of lives that often feel like they get in the way. In *SPEECH/ACT*, Katie Schaag explores the resonances of linguistic performativity, thinking through the politics, registers, and affective climates of performative actions and language. Schaag grants the Act a leading role, as distinct from but also embroiled with Speech in this performative text. Sketching what she terms a ‘dematerialised theatre of the mind’, Schaag probes at the edges of what felicitous performative utterance might do and mean, whilst holding space for the existential dread that underpins our experiences of climate change. In her play, the errant and the instructive—such as formal elements of script-writing or aspects of dramaturgical composition—are mobilised, emerging through and as breaks and utterances that are metatheatrical. Form, then, cannot be separated from its materiality.

In Alexandra Baybutt and Anna Leon’s collaborative [Margins] piece ‘Not All Lateness Is the Same’, an assemblage of scores, paratexts, and a glossary shape an inquiry into the circumstance of being late, across multiple contexts, through the prism of a movement practitioner and researcher and a dance historian. Baybutt and Leon propose this as a dialogue between a number of intersecting encounters: the role of spacetime in particular choreographic practices, in theory and practice, concept and movement. To Baybutt and Leon, lateness is a kind of leak ‘out of specific epistemic frameworks that defines modes, limits, and values of knowledge production’, performing lateness in the formal and epistemic edges of the work itself. The scores place various instructions—from attending a performance without being late, to group choreographies—with epistemic frameworks that might frame these as invitations. As readers, we move across these scores that perform the

knowledge systems that they dialogue with or emerge from. The invitation Baybutt and Leon give is to see how these scores unfold as action and translations.

The calls put forward in these [Margins] pieces find resonant responses elsewhere in the journal's open submissions. In 'Performative Utopias: Making Space, Taking Time, Doing Differently?', Teemu Paavolainen challenges the 'anti-utopian prejudice' latent in so-called 'realist' ideologies. Instead, Paavolainen argues that realism should be understood in terms of its performative effects, one of which is the brining into being the impression that utopias are impossible; that is, they are actively 'made impossible' by the material conditions of capitalist extractivism that deny the time and space that are the necessary preconditions for utopian being. Paavolainen builds on recent work in Utopian Studies, such as Jerry Burkette's argument that utopia is not a thing but 'something that people do', and hence should be understood as a verb, a mode of doing. Paavolainen's essay examines the interchangeable notions of 'utopia' and 'reality' as performative (understood as made and un-made by repetition, common sense, bureaucratic / coercive processes) and thus offers utopia as a matter of performing differently in the present; to take time, make space and sustain oppositional practices until they become normative. 'To utopia', then, is to reclaim time by doing time differently, to give space for slow imagination and to cultivate 'a theoretical practice of perceiving otherwise'—perhaps modelled precisely in the kinds of scores given by Baybutt and Leon, for example.

Similarly, Christina Kapadocha's account of her practice-as-research project *Are We Still in Touch?* describes a microtopian undertaking, in which the experiential and somatic modes offered by performance practices might be the grounds for 'fleshy' intersubjectivity, 'potentially opening new pathways for relational and societal transformation.' Kapadocha draws on a trajectory of phenomenological ethics from Maurice Merleau-Ponty through Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey to complicate a universalizing tendency of 'the body' that is latent in some somatic practices, instead foregrounding difference and differentiation. 'How about a touch that doesn't want to change/to direct/to push/to press/how about a touch that listens, sees/an interplay of the senses,' she asks. The publication here, enriched with step-by-step video documentation, offers itself as both reading and experiential process.

A fleshy ethics is also explored in Yu-Chien Wu's 'I Love to You and Cut on Me: A Call from the Surface,' which rethinks the act of wounding in performance, on both skin and latex, through the prism of philosophy, proposing the emergence of 'hyperreal painfulness' as pure representations that in fact, enact pain. Moving away from Peggy Phelan's articulation of the wound as a vanishing point for that which is unrepresentable, Wu focuses on performances of wounding by Franko B, SUKA OFF, and VestAndPage to argue against a transmission of trauma or pain, proposing that wounds in these instances are separate from the subject experiencing suffering. Wu finds resonances between Luce Irigaray's notion of irreducibility and Jean Baudrillard's theory of seduction to propose that wounds' ethical weight lies beyond their intention or seduction. As in Kapadocha's analysis of her own practice, Wu emphasizes the importance of separation in the intersubjective encounter, as exemplified by Irigaray's insertion of "to" into the phrase "I love to you."

Crucially, an aspect of the 'open' for Performance Philosophy as a field, and *Performance Philosophy* as a journal, concerns openness between and across epistemological geographies and territories—thinking not only with European words and concepts, for example—as well as different domains of creative practice. As examples of the former, in this issue we find Mischa Twitchin taking inspiration from the Chinese concept of *shi*, and Shalom Ìbírónkẹ and Yemi Atanda expanding on the pan-African principle of Ubuntu; and of the latter, a pair of articles by Giuseppe Torre and Joshua Bergamin and Christopher A. Williams separately consider related phenomena of the human-assemblage interactions that take place within musical performance.

The contribution by Twitchin, 'Dramaturgical Potential: Is it Necessary?' uses the question of necessity as a way to resist the gravitational pull of classical dramaturgy terminology, explanation, and normativity. Through translation as both a conceptual and practical endeavour, from Greek inheritances to Chinese concepts such as propensity [*shì*], neutral efficacy, and the concept of *dao*, it recasts dramaturgy as an emergent, non-dogmatic attentive awareness of what matters in assemblage: the unfinished as a condition for thought, for chance and for ethical practice. In contrast, Ìbírónkẹ and Atanda's approach is more ethnographic than theoretical, taking as its subject the practice of highly orchestrated initiation ceremonies at the beginning of academic studies for new Theatre Arts students, which has become fairly widespread in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. 'Decolonising the Stage' reworks these ceremonies as philosophically important transition rituals. Based on Ubuntu and mytho-ritual frameworks, this essay suggests that the embodied pedagogies (dressing, arriving on time, processions, singing) of these ritualised ceremonies do not simply socialise students into a discipline, but rather establish an ethics of relational being and collective responsibility, challenging Eurocentric assumptions regarding professional competence and theatrical legitimacy. This contribution posits that the site of theatre education is already a locus of decolonial praxis and cultural affirmations

In 'Digital Instruments: Extensions or Media?', Giuseppe Torre revisits both classical and emergent media theory to analyze the differences between a variety of different kinds of human-instrument relationships, displaying varying degrees of digitized and amplified modifications to the player-instrument apparatus. Torre departs from post-phenomenological accounts to insist that certain ontological distinctions emerge with the presence of digitizing technology, complicating ideas of embodiment and generating hermeneutic relationships that 'necessitate signification and translation.' And in 'On Sense-making, Groove, and Choice in Experimental Improvised Music,' Joshua Bergamin and Christopher A. Williams contest the idea that improvisation is necessarily 'free'. Instead, they draw on enactivist philosophers Hanne De Jaegher and Ezequiel Di Paolo's account of 'participatory sense-making' to consider the ways in which the need to make sense of what is happening, literally as well as conceptually, acts as a (generative) constraint on improvisation. Agency is not individualized, but distributed throughout the music-making assemblage, as exemplified in their analysis by the way that 'groove' functions as an emergent organizing principle. They explore this dynamic through 'phenomenological interviews' with members of the Splitter Orchester, whose work is featured and analysed in the article.

These various articles and interventions, then, are both responses to an open call and issuers of a call of their own: to read, to listen, to will, to utopia, to initiate. Taken together, these essays form a coherent sequence of de-colonial re-situation, performative re-worlding and dramaturgical re-formulation. Performance emerges as a communal ethic, a utopian practice of creating space in hostile realities and a disciplined openness to the unfinished which in turn may allow us to imagine, and therefore enact, new paradigms of care, agency, and relation through performance.

The second part of this volume, forthcoming in 2026, will present further invitations: to make zines with earthworms, to dance and be danced by the weather, to spill into the margins. We thank our diverse contributors for their patience and their imagination as we gather these works together, and we are grateful to our many peer reviewers for helping to ensure the quality and clarity of the propositions here. And we thank you, our readers, for attending to these calls in the ways that they meet you.

Works Cited

Cull Ó Maoilearca, Laura, Will Daddario, Diana Damian Martin, and Theron Schmidt. 2022. "Performance Philosophy 7(2) (2022): Imagining the Open." *Performance Philosophy* 7 (2): 1–6.
<https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2022.72406>.

© 2025 Diana Damian Martin, Eve Katsouraki, and Theron Schmidt



Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).