Call for Papers: Theory and Criticism Focus Group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), 2013 conference

Orlando, August 1-4, 2013

**"Play/Ground” – An Interactive Roundtable Event**

**In response to the 2013 ATHE conference theme of “P[L]AY: Performance, Pleasure, and Pedagogy,” the Theory and Criticism Focus Group seeks praxis and scholarship that explore the notion of a “performance playground.”**

Performance is practiced on the playground. In parks or street corners, rooftops or rooms, on playgrounds we explore performance through play. By kicking a soccer ball or stacking blocks, we investigate physical movement and spatial relationships. By trying the roles of soldier and doctor, princess and president, we test racial, social, and gender boundaries as we discover the rules of play. By promoting or challenging those rules, we create art and arguments today. Actors play roles. Teachers play theatre games. Critics go to a play. Writers play with words. Theorists play with ideas. Activists confront power plays. Yet our performances of play, and our playful performances, are always ideologically grounded, shaped by cultural practices, historical moments, spatial configurations, and moral philosophies. Stanislavski and Suzuki ground the actor’s craft. Ground plans shape movement choices. Technological innovations improve the daily grind. Performance challenges or sustains ground–in assumptions and practices.

The Theory and Criticism Focus Group is curating a roundtable series that encourages participants and audiences to imagine a performative **Play/Ground, a place where theory, practice, and play come together.** We aim to create a series of panels where scholars, teachers, and practitioners can investigate, challenge, re-imagine, and explode how **historical or contemporary theatre-makers and theorists have played with performance forms, thereby challenging cultural practices, contesting ideological norms, and intervening in social and political debates.**

Theory and Criticism seeks submissions from theatre artists, pedagogues, scholars, activists, philosophers, and critics interested in exploring the notion of the performative **Play/Ground**. Building on the tradition of our previous panel series, we strive to include a diverse range of participants from graduate students and emerging scholars, to professional critics, established artists, and senior scholars. For the 2013 conference, we will host a series of roundtable discussions that take up the notion of the performative **Play/Ground** from a range of disciplinary practices and methodological approaches. Questions to consider include but are not limited to:

1. **How has theatre or performance theory historically engaged with notions of play? How do specific schools of criticism frame play? What contemporary or historical performances exemplify or resist the classic theorists of play? How do new performance forms, or the new media landscape, challenge our understandings of performance as play?**
2. **How does performance pedagogy adapt play for artistic or political purpose? What assumptions do performance pedagogy or theatre history pedagogy make about how students should be “grounded,” or what knowledge and skills they need? What playful performance pedagogy do you use, and why? How does your institution frustrate or support play on your campus and in your community?**
3. **How can play be harnessed for outreach or community engagement? What can we learn from playful attempts to engage with publics and counterpublics? How can play work as criticism or activism? What are the ethical considerations or boundaries of play or playful performances?**
4. **How can play be embodied in performance? How are theories that engage with notions of playful creativity useful for performance practice? How can playful praxis challenge or explode accepted performance practices?**
5. **How do notions of space, place, and location ground our sense of play? How can space be used playfully in performances? How does space ground social and political debates, or playfully disrupt ideological norms?**
6. **How does play relate to ideology? How do performances of play, or playful performances, erase or reveal issues of labor, gender, race, and/or class, in both the theatre and in the academy?**

Position papers could take the form of a short essay, a manifesto, an outreach exercise, a critical review, a theoretical musing, a research report, a creative project, an interview, or an embodied performance practice.

The Theory and Criticism Focus Group will be accepting individual, 250–word position paper abstracts for the **Play/Ground** roundtable series until Wednesday, October 24th, 2012. Submissions should include an abstract (250 words or less), a title, contact information (name, institutional affiliation, email address, and phone number), a brief bio (50 words or less), and any specific A/V requirements. Participants will be informed of their acceptance by Monday, October 29th, and Theory and Criticism will oversee the submission of the series panels through ATHE’s online proposal process. Send your paper abstracts to Theory and Criticism focus group conference planner Susanne Shawyer at [sshawyer@gmail.com](mailto:sshawyer@gmail.com).

**Complete session proposals, sponsored by the Theory and Criticism Focus Group**

We also seek complete session proposals for the 2013 conference that include a broad range of theoretical interrogations and applications. We encourage multidisciplinary dialogues across the fields of performance scholarship and seek participants from a variety of focus group affiliations. Note that all multidisciplinary proposals must be authorized by three sponsoring ATHE focus groups; please contact the appropriate focus group conference planners and or committee chair for authorization. For a list of the ATHE focus group conference planners visit <http://www.athe.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=14>  and click on the desired focus group.

**The Theory and Criticism Focus Group supports broad definitions of criticism and performance, and therefore encourages a wide range of examples and topics. Feel free to explore both historical and contemporary critics and theorists, in popular culture, academic scholarship, and performance praxis. Panel proposals that engage scholarly conversation in creative ways are highly encouraged.**

Complete session proposals (separate from the roundtable series) should be submitted directly to ATHE: <http://www.athe.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=156>. All participants must be included in these proposals.  The website includes submission information and forms.  The session proposal deadline is November 1st, 2013.

NOTES:

If you have any questions about the ATHE panel proposal submission process, feel free to email Susanne Shawyer at sshawyer@gmail.com.

Single paper submissions (outside of our annual roundtable series or a complete proposed session) looking for a session home may contact [sshawyer@gmail.com](mailto:sshawyer@gmail.com).

Individuals do not need to be a member of Theory and Criticism or ATHE to submit single presentations or panels.  However, if chosen and scheduled, participants must become members of ATHE by the time of the conference.