

Call for Papers: **Theory and Criticism Focus Group** of the
Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), 2014 conference
Scottsdale, AZ, July 24-27, 2014

"Im/Possibilities" of Performance Roundtable Series

In response to the 2014 ATHE conference theme of "Dream Acts: Performance as Refuge, Resistance, and Renewal," the Theory and Criticism Focus Group seeks praxis and scholarship that investigate the im/possibilities of performance.

In some ways, all theatre centers on dream acts—performance provides a way to imagine, to rehearse, and to conjure new realities. Each time we direct, dramaturg, or enact a new performance, we embrace the various creative ways that theatre makes the impossible possible. Playwrights dream new worlds into being. Actors use the "magic if" to imagine themselves into character. Designers use shadow, color, and texture to bring the world of dreams into the reality of live performance. Dramaturgs interpret and enlighten dreamscapes onstage. Activists dream of a better world, and resist the nightmare of passivity. At every turn, our dream acts are ideologically grounded, shaped by cultural practices, historical moments, spatial configurations, and moral philosophies.

The Theory and Criticism Focus Group invites you to explore **the im/possibilities of Dream Acts, an oasis 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 imagined, resisted, and renewed 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 **im/possible** in our roundtable series. 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 2014 conference, we will host a series of discussions inspired by individual position papers that take up the notion of the **im/possible** 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 dream acts? How do specific schools of criticism frame dreaming? What contemporary or historical performances exemplify or resist the classic imagination? How do new performance forms, or the new media landscape, challenge our understandings of performance as a dream act?

2) How do we enact dreams (or im/possibilities) in performance pedagogy for artistic or political purpose? What assumptions do performance pedagogy or theatre history pedagogy make about the scope of students' dreams, or what knowledge and skills they should desire? What im/possible performance pedagogy do you use, and why? How does your institution frustrate or support refuge, resistance, and/or renewal on your campus and in your community?

3) How can dreaming be harnessed for outreach or community engagement? What can we learn from im/possible attempts to engage with publics and counterpublics? How can dream acts work as criticism or activism? What are the ethical considerations or boundaries of dreaming or imaginary performances?

4) How can dreaming be embodied in performance? How are theories that engage with notions of dream worlds and acts useful for performance practice? How can directors/designers be im/possible dreamers? How can im/possible praxis challenge or explode accepted performance practices?

5) How do notions of space, place, and location ground our sense of dream acts? How can space be used imaginatively in performances? How does space provide refuge for social and political debates, or resist ideological norms?

6) How does dreaming relate to ideology? How do performances of dreams, or dreamy 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. Depending on the number of participants per roundtable, these position papers will be an average of 7 minutes long each, or approximately 6 pages double-spaced.

The Theory and Criticism Focus Group will be accepting individual, 250–word position paper abstracts for the **Im/Possible** roundtable series until Thursday, October 24th, 2013. 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 Tuesday, 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 Jane Barnette at jbarne48@kennesaw.edu

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

We also seek complete session proposals for the 2014 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. (By “authorization,” we mean that you contact the focus group representatives to ensure that they would be interested in sponsoring your multidisciplinary panel—this is a simple process that usually involves a quick email exchange, but it should be done *in advance* of the proposal deadline of November 1.) 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, 2014.

NOTES:

If you have any questions about the ATHE panel proposal submission process, feel free to email Jane Barnette at jbarne48@kennesaw.edu.

Single paper submissions (outside of our annual roundtable series or a complete proposed session) looking for a session home may contact jbarne48@kennesaw.edu. To expedite the feedback process, please include an abstract of your paper in the query email.

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.