Call for submissions:

*Performance Matters* 3.1 (May 2017)

Special issue on “Performing Religion”

Performance and religion, both as practices and as fields of study, overlap. In religious studies, performance theory has provided a way to understand ritual as action with performative force (Tambiah 1979; Hollywood 2002), while a shared interest in ritual fueled the exchanges between Richard Schechner and Victor Turner from which grew one branch of performance studies as a discipline. Less explicitly, a reverence among performance theorists for theater’s transformational potential and performance’s politically liberatory power inspires some of the field’s foundational work (Dolan 2005; Phelan 1993). These commitments in turn draw strength from a long scholarly tradition that traces the mutually constitutive histories of theater and religion. In performance studies, a growing body of recent scholarship has reinvigorated the question of what it means to perform religion. Unlike earlier performance research which tended to downplay the religious aspects of ritual practice, this newer work focuses directly on religious activities like worship, private devotion, preaching, evangelization, and veneration. Whether analyzing onstage manifestations of Krishna (Mason 2009), evangelical dramaturgy (Stevenson 2013), proselytization as activist performance (Fletcher 2013), or occult theater (Lingan 2014), this work examines the theatrical and performance strategies of religious communities and movements. In doing so, it raises a series of disciplinary and methodological questions. What are the advantages and pitfalls of using theater and performance as analytical frameworks for studying religious activity? To what degree does ritual still occupy the middle ground between religious studies and performance studies? How might greater dialogue between scholars in these two fields enrich research on religious performance? In the interest of pursuing these and other related questions, *Performance Matters* invites papers that draw on performance theory, theater metaphors and the tools of performance analysis or creation to conduct research on religious practices, texts, histories, philosophies, or phenomena.

Interested contributors are asked to send short abstracts and paper proposals (250 words) to [joy\_palacios@sfu.ca](mailto:joy_palacios@sfu.ca) by July 15, 2016.

Reviews of relevant performances or theatrical productions, as well as of books related to the theme of religious performance, are also invited, as are short position statements for a forum section featuring scholars in performance studies who work on religion and scholars in religious studies who think about performance.

Invited full papers will then be due by November 30, 2016.

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Dolan, Jill. 2005. *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Fletcher, John. 2013. *Preaching to Convert: Evangelical Outreach and Performance Activism in a Secular Age*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Hollywood, Amy. 2002. ‘Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization’. *History of Religions* 42 (2): 93–115.

Lingan, Edmund B. 2014. *The Theatre of the Occult Revival: Alternative Spiritual Performance from 1875 to the Present*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mason, David V. 2009. *Theatre and Religion on Krishna’s Stage: Performing Vrindavan*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Phelan, Peggy. 1993. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London and New York: Routledge.

Stevenson, Jill. 2013. *Sensational Devotion: Evangelical Performance in Twenty-First-Century America*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Tambiah, Stanley J. 1979. *A Performative Approach to Ritual*. London: The British Academy.