**Abstracts and bios** (in order of presentation)

**Olivia Lamont Bishop**

**Navigating Nowhere: Performing Distance and Displacement in Khalid Abdalla’s Live Lecture**

**Abstract**:

This presentation explores Khalid Abdalla’s Nowhere, a live performance-lecture that stages the epistemological and emotional dislocations of exile through a dramaturgy of fragmentation, mediation and absence. Performed in multiple languages and formats, including archival footage, digital images, personal testimony and live narration, Nowhere resists narrative cohesion or testimonial closure. Instead, it performs distance: between the performer and his past, between media and memory and between audience and subject.

Rather than offering a direct account of displacement, Nowhere enacts the structural conditions of exile, discontinuity, opacity and partial visibility, through its fractured aesthetic. This presentation reads the performance as an example of what I call critical distance: an ethical dramaturgical strategy that foregrounds dislocation not as a representational failure, but as a generative form. Drawing on performance analysis and theoretical frameworks from transnational ethics and sensory dramaturgy, I explore how Nowhere interrupts the expectation of empathetic identification and invites spectators into a space of interpretive labour and accountability.

In focusing on this live lecture format of a hybrid space between performance, pedagogy and political address, I also reflect on the position of the artist-researcher and how performative knowledge is produced, embodied and disrupted in works that stage migration.

This case study contributes to broader conversations around the ethics of witnessing, dramaturgies of displacement and the role of distance in shaping responsible spectatorship in migration performance.

**Bio:** Olivia Lamont Bishop (http://olivialamontbishop.com) is a PhD candidate and Visiting Lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is the Project Coordinator for the Migrant Dramaturgies Network. Olivia is a performance maker and is currently the Project Manager for Borderlands charity for refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol.

**Roxana Trifan**

**The M Trilogy – Medea**

**Abstract:**

My presentation offers a case study of *The M Trilogy – Medea*, a practice research project that reconfigures the Euripidean tragedy through the lens of migration, exile and intercultural negotiation. The trilogy interrogates how myth functions as both narrative and performative framework, shaping and being shaped by contemporary experiences of displacement, cultural translation and the negotiation of belonging.

The focus is on the first part, *Medea – The Prologues*, premiering at Melbourne National Theatre in 2025. This segment concentrates on the threshold of Medea’s story, exploring beginnings as liminal spaces marked by rupture and negotiation. Drawing from Pasolini’s cinematic adaptation and fieldwork-informed perspectives on migration, the work employs a hybrid methodology combining live music, multilingual textual fragments (English, Romanian, Italian) and participatory dramaturgy to materialize the tension between memory, identity and mobility.

The case study will examine three interrelated dimensions: the dramaturgical and methodological strategies employed in devising across languages and cultures; the ethical and epistemological implications of performance as research in migration contexts; the ways embodied practice mediates theoretical and socio-political questions of mobility, exile and cultural translation.

By foregrounding practice as both method and knowledge-production, the presentation contributes to the Working Group interrogation of the intersections between artistic experimentation, migration narratives and scholarly reflection. It demonstrates how contemporary performance can create critical spaces for negotiating the ethics and aesthetics of movement, belonging and transnational cultural dialogue.

**Bio:** Roxana Păun Trifan is an actor and researcher investigating the intersections of myth, migration and embodied storytelling. With a PhD in Theatre Studies and awarded the 2024 Philip Parsons Prize for Practice Research, Roxana combines academic inquiry with experimental performance making. Her work traverses devised theatre, dramaturgy and cross-cultural collaboration, and includes *The Birthday Book of Storms* (La Mama 2023), *Masha in Translation* (Theatre Works/Melbourne Fringe 2022) and *Medea* (The National Theatre Melbourne 2025). The current project *M Trilogy – Medea* foregrounds liminality, multilingualism and the negotiation of belonging, exploring how performance generates knowledge at the threshold of myth and lived experience.

**Jahnvi Sharma**

**Symphonies of Tibetan Memory: Surviving in Exile through Opera**

**Abstract:**

Violent experiences of annexation and consequent journeys into exile ruptures several kinship ties and identities; yet communities find many ways to survive. For Tibetans in exile, performance—most vividly their Ache Lhamo opera—has become a bridge between past and present, memory and history, tradition and identity. This essay moves within the memoryscape of Tibetan refugees living in India, tracing how their folk performance tradition of Ache Lhamo carries collective memory, sustains imagination, and strengthens community survival. Methodologically, it draws on ethnographic reflections, performance analysis and participant observation. The reflections are largely grounded in the exilic experiences of the Tibetan Buddhist community.

**Bio:** Jahnvi Sharma is an independent performance researcher and theatre practitioner based in India with a postgraduate degree in Performance Studies. She is co-founder of the community oriented art collective *Dreamers 1903* and has been actively engaged with the Tibetan performing arts for the past three years. Her research interests include Asian diasporic performances, exile as embodied experience, and engaging with performance as an episteme. She is an aspiring PhD scholar and is currently developing her doctoral project, *Embodied Remains: Ache Lhamo Symphonies in the Continuum of Tibetan Exile*.

**Swati Joshi**

**Embodied Narrative Pathways: Navigating Refugee Peripatetic Care Between Text and Texture**

––‘And what we long for

Is to hear each others’ tales

And to tell them again (…)

About what goes unsaid

And what we choose to walk for

Is the possibility of trust

In language

To hear the unsaid spoken (…)

Step by step

As by virtue of walking which

We call our commons

Every sap vessel bathed in moisture

And what that commons calls for

Is what these stories sound (Herd 2016, loc.48-53)

**Abstract:**

This paper explores the performance of refugee peripatetic care as represented in the cathartic peripatetic stories and itinerant collaborative artworks supported by the *Refugee Tales* project and the United Nations respectively. The above excerpt, from the first volume of the *Refugee Tales* (2016), acquaints the readers with the stories narrated during the solidarity walks. *Refugee Tales* Volumes I-V (2016-24), a result of the flagship programme sponsored by Ali Smith, is a compendium documenting anonymous accounts of refugees shared with the renowned writers like Patience Agbabi, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Marina Lewycka, Lytton Smith, Baroness Shami Chakrabarti, and many more during the ‘Walk with Us’ events. However, when the literary segment poses limitations, pigment becomes the figment of hope. The 2022 global partnership between the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and Artolution provided an artistic solace to the refugees separated by geography by inviting them to come together and create artworks that bespeak their exhaustion from walking miles through dense woods and rough streets, among other perils like starvation, agonising insomnia, physical and sexual abuse, and much more. Like the refugees, the artworks travelled across global refugee camps, providing them an opportunity to explore the alternative of collaborative chromatic performance of storytelling as many refugees were unable to speak the languages of their host countries. This article examines how ambulatory creative works, such as walking stories and travelling collaborative artworks, enable refugees to narrate (in multiple ways) their perilous, peripatetic journeys and the self-care strategies they adopt to combat hunger, severe exhaustion, insomnia, and medical ailments during these journeys.

**Bio:** Following her doctoral research Swati Joshi is broadening the scope of her analysis of artistic self-care in Samuel Beckett’s œuvre by incorporating contemporary literary and artistic contributions of the refugees. Her research has been published in *Beckett and Nature* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2025), *Journal of Medical Humanities* (2025), *Handbook of Aging, Health and Public Policy: Perspectives from Asia* (Springer, 2022), *Humanities| MDPI* (2022), *Medical Humanities| BMJ* (2020, 2021, 2022), *The Polyphony: Conversations Across The Medical Humanities* (2022, 2024), among other places. She guest co-edited the special issue of the *Journal of Medical Humanities* which will be launched in September 2025. She is currently organising online seminars supported by *The Samuel Beckett Society*.

**Moira Day**

**The Play as Matryoshka Doll: Unpacking Imperialism, Colonization, Land and Geography with Magic Mittens and Scarves in a Time of War**

**Abstract**

On Sept 14, 2025, Zelenskyy addressed Ukrainian filmmakers on the critical need to sustain and support a national cinema/culture as a critical “weapon” of *survivance* in a time of war:

Today our cinema is fighting not only in the film space, but is fighting for its existence and for its identity. It is also fighting at the front and [through] many of your colleagues [...] who have gone to defend our country [and] unfortunately are not here today. But [they are here in] their work; their works will always remind us of them. [...] And this, in my opinion, is the greatest victory of Ukrainian cinema. It is, it exists, it lives. Inspires.

While, Zelenskyy’s words stress the role of those “who are here” in wielding culture as a weapon in a time of existential crisis, it is clearly a call also heard by many migrant artists, past and present, who “are not here today” because they moved to another country to escape violence and oppression at home. However, even when the traumatic rupture of an existential war “at home,” serves as a catalyst to the work of artists currently working abroad, the immigration experience, whether recent or filtered through several generations, has always made the project of preserving national *survivance* through art a more fraught and complicated one. In this regard, I have suggested the traditional Slavic Matryoshka doll as a metaphor for the way a number of recent prairie plays – *The First Métis Man of Odesa*, *Barvinok*, *Baba and the Magic Mitten/the Gift of the Kohkum Scarf* and *Kohkum’s Babushka -* have approached *survivance* in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Whether or not the play, at least on the surface is centered on one country or another, one century or another, beneath the often-bright, colorful exterior shell lies a nesting set of infinitely complex and interconnecting reflections on imperialism and colonialization, land and geography, and violence and displacement, here and abroad.

**Bio:** Moira Day is a *professor emerita* of Drama at the University of Saskatchewan. A former book editor and co-editor of *Theatre Research in Canada* /*Recherches théâtrales au Canada* she has published and lectured widely on Canadian theatre, with a particular focus on women and prairie theatre prior to 1960. Editing projects have included prairie play anthologies as well as special theme journal issues, and collections of essays on historical, contemporary and Indigenous theatre in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. A contributor to the recent, award-winning collection, *Canadian Performance Documents and Debates: A Sourcebook,* she remains active as a researcher/scholar.