

RICHARD  
SCHECHNER

MEDIA EDITOR SARAH LUCIE

# PERFORMANCE STUDIES

An Introduction

4th Edition





## PERFORMANCE STUDIES

Richard Schechner's pioneering textbook is a lively, accessible overview of the full range of performance, with primary extracts, student activities, key biographies, and over 200 images of global performance.

The publication of *Performance Studies: An Introduction* was a defining moment for the field. This fourth edition has been revised with two new chapters, up-to-date coverage of global and intercultural performances, and an in-depth exploration of the growing international importance of performance studies. Among the book's topics are the performing arts and popular entertainments, rituals, play and games, social media, the performances of the paleolithic period, and the performances of everyday life. Supporting examples and ideas are drawn from the social sciences, performing arts, poststructuralism, ritual theory, ethology, philosophy, and aesthetics. *Performance Studies: An Introduction* features the broadest and most in-depth analysis possible.

*Performance Studies: An Introduction* is the definitive overview for undergraduates at all levels and beginning graduate students in performance studies, the performing arts, and cultural studies.

This new edition is also supported by a fully updated companion website, offering a variety of interactive resources, teaching tools, and research links.

**Richard Schechner** is a pioneer of performance studies. A scholar, theatre director, editor, and playwright, he is University Professor of Performance Studies Emeritus at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University and Editor of *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies*. Among his many books are *Environmental Theater* (1973), *The End of Humanism* (1982), *Performance Theory* (2003), *Between Theater and Anthropology* (1985), *The Future of Ritual* (1993), *Over, Under, and Around: Essays on Performance and Culture* (2004), and *Performed Imaginaries* (2015). His books and essays have been translated into more than 20 languages. He is the general editor of the Worlds of Performance series and the Enactments series. He founded The Performance Group, East Coast Artists, and East End Players and was a co-producing director of the Free Southern Theater and the New Orleans Group. He has directed theatre, led performance workshops, and lectured in the USA, Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

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## Praise for Previous Editions

“Performance Studies’ most persistent provocateur, a titan in the field, offers a new twist on his dynamically evolving gazetteer. The new edition provides exactly what a print edition cannot: the doing, not merely the writing about performance.”

Tracy C. Davis, *Northwestern University*

“This ever improved 3rd edition of *Performance Studies: An Introduction* will facilitate Schechner’s masterful ability to bring newcomers into and through this complex, richly interdisciplinary material. With new media links, videos, and up-to-the-minute additions, the book continues to be a terrific resource for those of us leading our students to the deep well that constitutes the field.”

Jill Dolan, *Annan Professor in English and Theatre, Princeton University*

“This new edition is Schechner brought right up to date. As father of the field, Schechner steps into the moment with the new companion website. It’s outstanding online support for the text is exactly what we need. As usual, he is a game changer.”

Anna Deavere Smith, *Tisch School of the Arts, NYU*

“This textbook is excellent – I have used it in classes repeatedly in courses on World Theatre as well as Performance Theory. This new edition and the accompanying website will deepen the classroom experience even more. The book provides a provocative guide to questions that arise when performance is approached in a global perspective. It links broad ideas to specific contexts, particular thinkers, and precise examples from theatre and performance traditions.”

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Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *performance artist and writer, San Francisco*

“This fecund and useful volume sets up lively possibilities for exploring the entire spectrum of behaviors, restored or otherwise that Schechner as scholar, editor, and practitioner, has been sorting out for years with an enterprising spirit that now defines performance studies.”

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“An appropriately broad-ranging, challenging, and provocative introduction, equally important for practicing artists as for students and scholars of the performing arts.”

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“This isn’t merely the musings of a theatre director who never stops innovating. It is a global thinker’s striking, historic way of understanding human nature from a surprisingly practical perspective, which can be adapted in countless areas at numerous levels.”

Sun Huizhu, *Professor of Drama, Shanghai Theatre Academy*

“Exactly what I have longed for. It provides linkages between concepts, gives historical perspective, and explains theoretical ideas in a language accessible to undergraduate students. It will be required reading.”

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“Well written, thoughtful and provocative. An essential purchase.”

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“The text is very cleverly put together with a clear idea of how its features contribute to the reading of the material. I frankly cannot imagine it being done better.”

Simon Shepherd, *Central School of Speech and Drama, London*

“It will make the teaching of performance studies a lot easier.”

Colin Counsell, *University of North London*



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# PERFORMANCE STUDIES

## An Introduction

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Richard Schechner  
Media Editor – Sarah Lucie

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To

Julian and Caleb, my grandsons



## PERFORMANCE

Usually people say that a truly artistic show will always be unique,  
impossible to be repeated: never will the same actors,  
in the same play, produce the same show.

Theatre is Life.

People also say that, in life, we never really do anything  
for the first time, always repeating  
past experiences, habits, rituals, conventions.

Life is Theatre.

Richard Schechner, with his sensibility and intelligence,  
leads us to explore the limits between Life and Theatre,  
which he calls Performance. With his knowledge,  
he allows us to discover other thinkers,  
stimulating us to have our own thoughts.

Augusto Boal



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# PREFACE

Whoever cannot seek  
the unforeseen sees nothing,  
for the known way  
is an impasse.

Heraclitus, Fragment 7  
(Brooks Haxton, translator)

Performance studies – as a practice, a theory, an academic discipline – is dynamic, unfinishable. Whatever it is, it wasn't exactly that before and it won't be exactly that again. Therefore, a textbook of performance studies can only be a snapshot or, at best, a few moments of moving action "taken" during a specific span of historically conditioned time. The book you hold in your hands was first published in 2002, then revised in 2006 and 2013. For the 2020 edition I revised the book more radically. There are two new chapters – "Performing in the Paleolithic" and "Social Media." The other chapters have been extensively reworked. There are new and enhanced media links pointing to myriad online resources. The book details where performance studies came from, where it is, and where it's going.

In *Performance Studies: An Introduction* I address both those steeped in performance studies and newcomers to the field. Performance studies is unsettled, open, diverse, and multiple in its methods, themes, objects of study, and participants: a field without fences. It is "inter" – interdisciplinary, intercultural, and (I hope) interesting. To be "inter" is to exist between, on the way from something to something else. "Inter" is exploring the liminal – participating in an ongoing process, a workshop.

The reference list at the end of the text includes what I consulted or cited, as well as the key writings of persons mentioned in the text. Some of these writings are ancient, others contemporary, some scholarly, others vernacular – from classics to newspaper articles and internet sites. There are some discrepancies between dates of first publication or composition given in the main body of the book and the dates in the references. For the most part, in compiling the references, I selected available editions in English hoping to provide an extensive, if not comprehensive, set of writings characterizing the field of performance studies. A few

words about the companion website. The website begins on a homepage with tabs for instructors and students to login, offering different interfaces depending on the visitor's status. The site features:

- short videos where I discuss my approach to performance studies and explain key ideas;
- PowerPoint presentations for each chapter that instructors can use in class and students can use to study/review material;
- links to websites for further study of topics such as the historical avantgarde, performance anthropology, social media, paleoperformances, and many other subjects of interest;
- links to videos of performances mentioned in the book;
- tutorials on key topics such as the methodologies and research tools of performance studies;
- an interactive glossary with a flashcard feature of key terms and biographies;
- activities for use in class;
- assignments for writing and fieldwork;
- quizzes and discussion questions designed to stimulate critical thinking;
- sample syllabi;
- a wiki for instructors to exchange ideas about teaching performance studies.

These resources, which will be regularly updated, help make *Performance Studies: An Introduction* an excellent choice for a broad range of courses from introductory and core curriculum undergraduate courses to advanced graduate school courses. These courses can be taught across the disciplines of the arts, social sciences, and humanities.

## PREFACE

I want *Performance Studies: An Introduction* to be useful to those already involved in performance studies while stimulating others to learn more about the field. Performance Studies is unsettled, open, diverse, and multiple in its methods, themes, subjects, arts, and persons. I hope this book will contribute to courses not only in Performance

Studies *per se* but also other courses introducing students to – what? Well, to life. My goal is nothing less than making Performance Studies a way to understand the world in its ceaseless becoming.

Richard Schechner  
New York, 2019

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I thank Professor Carol Martin, my wife and life partner, for her critical attention to my thinking and writing.

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I thank Mariellen Sandford, the Associate Editor of *TDR*, a journal I've edited – with Mariellen's steadfast assistance – for many years and which embodies the history, the changes, and the dynamism of performance studies. I thank the Consortium Editors and Contributing Editors of *TDR*. I thank Sara Brady, who developed the first media edition of this book, and who is *TDR*'s Managing Editor. I thank Sarah Lucie who developed the media for this edition. I thank Melissa Flower for assisting me on the images and other editorial tasks.

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I thank my colleagues in the Performance Studies Department, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, especially Diana Taylor and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, good friends, intellectual companions, and clear-eyed critics. I thank Allyson Green, Dean of the Tisch School of the Arts, and former dean Mary Schmidt-Campbell, for their support of my research and *TDR*.

And, emphatically, I thank the hundreds of students I have taught since the first day I met a freshman "Communications Skills" class at the University of Iowa in 1957 and after that, the M.A.s and Ph.D.s at Tulane University from 1962 to 1967 and at New York University from 1967 to 2017, and the B.A.s at NYU Abu Dhabi and Paris from 2012 to 2019. Many who once were my students are now professors and artists around the world. Some, actually, are retired: that's how long I've been at it. The Talmud correctly asserts: "Much have I learned from my teachers; even more from my colleagues; but most of all from my students." We keep in touch; we are a community.

I live and work in the intersection where personal, artistic, professional, and intellectual paths meet. It's a very busy roadway.

Richard Schechner  
New York, 2019

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## Margin icons



When this icon appears next to a passage or a text box, you can find suggestions for a relevant ‘Talk About’ discussion question on the website.



This icon indicates that the idea or topic in question is the subject of one of Richard Schechner’s online videos, giving his own take on the book’s main themes.

The Classroom Activity icon shows that there is a writing assignment, group activity, or performance project on the website relating to this topic.



The website has a suite of hyperlinks, leading to more information about all of the key figures and concepts marked by this icon.



# 1 WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?



## Introducing this book, this field, and me



What is performance? What is Performance Studies (PS)? Performance is a broad spectrum of actions ranging from play, games, sports, popular entertainments, and rituals to the performing arts, professional roles, political personae, media, and the constructions of race, gender, and identity in everyday life. To perform is to act in a play, to dance, to make music; to play your life roles as friend, child, parent, student, and so on; to pretend or make believe; to engage in sports and games; to enact sacred and secular rituals; to argue a case in court or present a PowerPoint in class . . . and many more activities, too. PS is the academic discipline whose topic is the broad spectrum.

The book you hold in your hand is “an” introduction to performance studies. There are other introductions, and that pleases me. The one overriding and underlying assumption of PS is that the field is open. There is no finality to performance studies, either theoretically or operationally. There are many voices, themes, opinions, methods, and subjects. As I will explain later in this chapter, anything and everything can be studied “as” performance. But this does not mean PS as an academic discipline lacks specific subjects to investigate or questions to focus on.

PS’s openness doesn’t mean there are no values. People want, need, and use standards to live, write, think, and act. As individuals and as parts of communities, people participate and interact with other people, other species, the planet, and whatever else is out there. The values guiding people are not “natural,” transcendent, timeless, God-given, inalienable. Values belong to ideologies, sciences, arts, religions, politics, and personal preferences. Values are hard-won and contingent, changing over time according to social, historical, and personal circumstances. Values are a function of cultures, nations, groups, and individuals.

This book embodies the values, theories, and practices of performance studies as understood by one particular person in the ninth decade of his life. This person is a Jewish Hindu Buddhist atheist living in New York City, married, the father of two children. He is a University Professor Emeritus at New York University where he taught PS for half a century (1967–2017). He is the Editor of *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies*. He directs plays, lectures, leads workshops, and writes books, essays, plays, poems, and short stories (see figure 1.1). He has travelled and worked in many parts of the world. Who I am is not irrelevant – because I will be leading you on a journey, you ought to know a little about your guide.

Because performance studies is so broad-ranging and open to new possibilities, no one can actually grasp its totality or press all its vastness and variety into a single book. My points of departure are my own teaching, research, artistic practice, and life experiences. But I am not limited by these. I will explore ideas far from my center, some even contrary to my values and opinions.

## The boxes

Before going on, let me point out a feature of this book. My text includes no quotations, citations, or notes. Ideas are drawn from many sources, but the written voice is my own. I hope this gives readers a smoother ride than many scholarly texts. At the same time, I want my readers to hear many voices. The boxes offer alternative and supplementary opinions and interruptions. The boxes provide short bios and other information. The boxes open the conversation in ways I cannot do alone. The boxes enact some of the diversity of performance studies. I want the effect to be of



fig 1.1. A selection of performances directed by Richard Schechner.



Ophelia drowning, from *Imagining O*, Peak Performances, Montclair, New Jersey, 2014. Photograph by Marina Levitskaya, courtesy Richard Schechner.



*Yokasta5 Redux*, Saviana Stanescu and Richard Schechner. The Yokastas strike a pose. From left to right: Phyllis Johnson, Jennifer Lim, Daphne Gaines, Rachel Bowditch. East Coast Artists, New York, 2005. Photograph by Ryan Jensen.



*Cherry Ka Bagicha* (The Cherry Orchard), Anton Chekhov. Act 2, Dunyasha flirting with Yepikhodov. With the Repertory Company of the National School of Drama, New Delhi, 1982. Photograph by Richard Schechner.



*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, August Wilson. Act 2, Ma Rainey (seated, played by Sophie McIna), her girl Dussie Mae, played by Baby Cele, and her nephew, Sylvester. Grahamstown Festival, Republic of South Africa, 1992. Photograph by Richard Schechner.



*The Oresteia*, Aeschylus (in Chinese). Agamemnon, played by Wu Hsing-kuo, steps on the purple carpet. With the Contemporary Legend Theatre, Taipei, 1995. Photograph by Richard Schechner.



*Three Sisters*, Anton Chekhov. Act 2, Vershinin, played by Frank Wood, orating about the future. With East Coast Artists, New York 1997. Photograph by Richard Schechner.

a seminar with many hands raised or of a computer desktop with many open windows.

## Defining performance

You are performing right now. How so? Are you in your dorm or apartment reading this book? Or maybe you're in a crowded coffee shop or a quiet library. If you are online, you are probably multitasking—reading even while you're chatting with friends. You know how to switch between schoolwork and social life. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, think about how you're sitting, or lying down, or whatever. Does it matter (to you or to anyone?) how you look, how you present yourself to the world? Have you combed your hair, are your clothes neat

or sloppy, fancy or plain? Consider the various “yous” — different personae — you enact during a single day. The student you, the friend you, the daughter or son you, the playful you, the romantic you, and so on. Right now would you use the same body language if you were enacting another of your personae? Would you be wearing the same clothes? Are you studying alone or in a group? What did you do when you first woke up? Go to the bathroom, brush your teeth, grab a coffee? Say “Hi” to whomever was next to you or in the room across the hall? Did you look in a mirror, make a face, check yourself out? Were you performing for and to yourself?

How do these circumstances — and whatever others are operating throughout your life — affect how you present yourself? Is there a difference between “presenting” and “performing”? (See Goffman box.)

### Erving Goffman

#### *Defining performance*

A “performance” may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute to the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. The pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be called a “part” or a “routine.” These situational terms can easily be related to conventional structural ones. When an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions, a social relationship is likely to arise. Defining social role as the enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status, we can say that a social role will involve one or more parts and that each of these different parts may be presented by the performer on a series of occasions to the same kinds of audiences or to an audience of the same persons.

1959, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 15–16

**Erving Goffman (1922–82):** Canadian-born anthropologist who studied the performances and rituals of everyday life. His books include *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), *Behavior in Public Places* (1963), *Interaction Ritual* (1967), and *Frame Analysis* (1974).

Whatever you are doing now, whoever you are at this moment, whatever you did when you began your day, you were and are performing. Later on in this chapter, I will help you distinguish between “is” performing and “as” performing. For now, I want you to think about the assertion that

performing is an ongoing, never-ending activity or set of activities. Sometimes one is aware of performing and sometimes one is not aware of it.

Hopefully I've made you more aware than you ordinarily are. This awareness ranges from just a flick of consciousness

## WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?

to a total focus on repeating an action or getting an action right, or seeing how someone else accomplishes an action – from the kind of focus demonstrated by a ballet dancer or a baseball player to mini-movements hardly noticeable because they are so “ordinary.”

What are performance and performance studies theoretically? One way to parse existence is to distinguish among:

- Being
- Doing
- Showing doing
- Explaining showing doing

“Being” is existence itself, all that is. “Doing” is the activity of all that is, from quarks to viruses to sentient beings to supergalactic strings. “Showing doing” is pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing. “Explaining showing doing” is performance studies.

Performing takes place both in doing and showing doing. The more clearly you show what you are doing, the more obviously you are performing. Performing varies according to circumstances. In business, sports, and sex, performing lets others know that you can do something up to a standard, or beyond. In the arts, performing is putting on a show, a play, a dance, a concert. In everyday life, performing is underlining an action, showing off. People in the twenty-first century – enabled, powered, and driven by social media and vast digital resources – live by means of performing.

Of course, when you are in flow – cruising along on autopilot – you might not know that you are performing. We will examine flow in Chapter 6. For now, even if you are not performing for yourself, imagine that someone else is observing you. Are you performing for that someone? What about candid photographs, shots snapped with the subjects unaware of the photographer? Candid on view are performances for those seeing them even if they were not performances for those photographed. In this way, even natural processes – a mountain range, a sunset, the sea, a distant galaxy – can be framed and presented as performances.

At the human level, we slip in and out of awareness of our own actions and the actions of others. The more aware we are of what we, or others, are doing, the more those actions are “performances.” Thus a particular molecule of action may or may not be a performance depending on one’s awareness of the action. With awareness comes the ability to adjust your own actions and how you interpret the actions of others. A selfie is a performance . . . of oneself. At the professional level, a choreographer, theatre or film director, and party-planner know how to manage the actions of others.

Two ways of conceptualizing the broad spectrum of performance are “the fan and the web” (see figure 1.2). The broad spectrum can also be illustrated photographically (see figure 1.3).

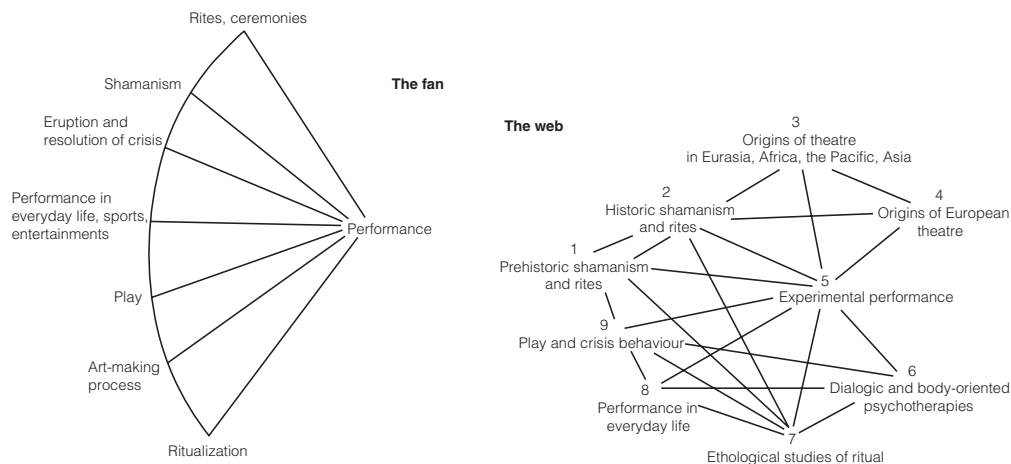


fig 1.2. The fan and the web. Drawing: “Fan” and “Web” from p. ii of *Performance Theory*. 1977 and all subsequent editions.

fig 1.3. A photographic array of some examples of the broad spectrum of performance.



**Ritual**

A master stilt walker flaps his cape above the crowd as he practices his dance moves during Carnival. Port of Spain, Trinidad. Photograph by Granderiviere/ Dreamstime.



**Ritual**

Girl receiving Eucharist from a priest at Grand Bay, Mauritius, First Holy Communion. Photograph by Perry Joseph/Ark Religion/Art Directors & Trip.



**Play**

Sam and Kate Taylor and their cousin Bridget Caird playing "dress up" in New Zealand, 1979. Photograph by Moira Taylor.



**Sports**

Owen Farrell of England runs with the ball in a rugby match between England and Italy, Twickenham Stadium, 2019. Photograph by Mitch Gunn/123RF.



**Popular Entertainment**

Woodstock Festival of music, 1969. Elliot Landy/Magnum Photos.



**Performing Arts: Theatre**

Peter Brook's 1970 production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Royal Shakespeare Theatre. On the swings, Alan Howard as Oberon and John Kane as Puck. Below, Sara Kestelman as Titania and David Waller as Bottom. Copyright 1970 David Farrell. Courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.



**Performing Arts: Dance**

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, *Story/Time* rehearsal, McGuire Theater, September 7, 2011. Gene Pittman for Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.



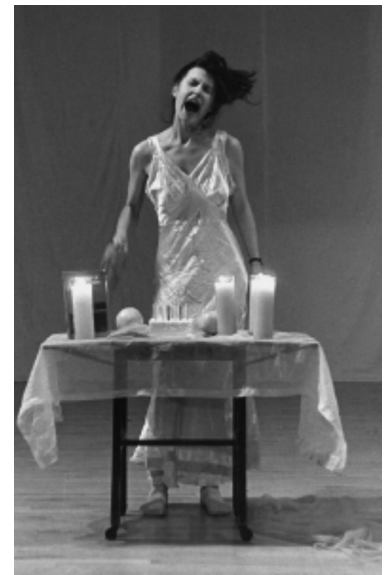
**Performance in Everyday Life**

Dr Basir Ahmad Jaghori talks to a patient at a mobile health clinic in the mountain village of Raquol, in Panjab district, Afghanistan, 9 June 2011. Photograph by Paula Bronstein/Getty Images.



**Political Performance**

Occupy Wall Street demonstrators stage a march past the New York Stock Exchange dressed as corporate zombies during a protest on Wall Street, 3 October 2011. Photograph by Emmanuel Dunand/AFP/Getty Images.



**Performance Art**

Performance View Poetry Project at Saint Marks Church, 1985. Keren Finley performing *Don't Hang the Angel*. Photograph by Dona Ann McAdams.

of everyday life” in the center to “rites and ceremonies” at the other end. Ritualization is an ethological term; rites and ceremonies are uniquely human.

The web depicts the same system more dynamically, more experientially. Each node interacts with all the others. It’s no accident that I place “experimental performance” at the center. This arbitrary and subjective positioning expresses my practice. Others might place something else at the center. In actual fact, there is no center – one ought to imagine the system in continuous motion and realignment. Furthermore I place historical events alongside speculations and artistic performances. This method is similar to that of Indigenous Australians who credit dreamtime with a reality stronger than ordinary time. My method is also similar to the classic theatre exercise wherein “as if” = “is.”

Performances occur in many different instances and kinds. Performance is best construed as a “broad spectrum” or “continuum” of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet.

## The nine kinds of performances

The broad spectrum of performance can be divided into nine kinds or categories:



- 1 In everyday life (**see figure 1.4a**): daily activities such as cooking, making the bed, walking to work, meeting friends, etc. are improvised performances that follow scripts also known as habits, routines, and conventions.
- 2 In art (**see figure 1.4b**): theatre, music, dance, and performance art are obviously performances. But painting, photography, ceramics, and writing can be understood performatively. The spaces where art is performed or exhibited are designed for viewing and/or participating. The arts – as we shall see during the course – provide performance theorists with models and metaphors to understand non-art performances. What the arts do so strikingly is to bring forward performance-as-such: activities that clearly show themselves: showing doing.
- 3 In sports and other popular entertainments (**see figure 1.4c**). Sports and other pop entertainments, like the arts, depend on role-playing, costuming, choreography, scenarios or scripts, and carefully arranged spaces. Each sport has its “characters” such as quarterback, outfielder, defender, goalkeeper, etc. Athletes’ uniforms are costumes. Training and practice is where athletes acquire performance skills and rehearse specific patterns of playing. Similarly, people are expected to dress and behave in defined ways at pop music concerts, clubs, restored villages, reenactments, and theme parks. At sports and pop entertainments, spectators perform assigned roles such as cheering fans often guided by cheerleaders; club or mosh pit dancers; listeners to tour guides. Stadiums,

**fig 1.4.** Examples of the nine kinds or categories of performance.



**fig 1.4a.** “All Around the Kitchen” by bduquette. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic via Flickr.



**fig 1.4b.** “Mudan 175/39.” Dancers: Michael Fernandez, Vitolio Jeune, Lindsay Renea, Morwood Pennewell, Kaori Otani, and Lynet Shig Nee Rochelle. Performance at Nazareth College Arts Center, Rochester, New York. Photograph by Paula Summit.

## WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?



fig 1.4c. Youth soccer, Indiana, USA. Photograph by Derek Jensens.



fig 1.4d. A doctor examining a patient. Both are costumed in their role-specific garb. As are the support staff behind. And of course the examination room is as carefully laid out as a theatre set. Photograph courtesy of the National Cancer Institute, USA.

clubs, playing fields, museums, etc. are designed as theatricalized spaces.

- 4 In medicine (see figure 1.4d), business, law, and other professions, and in ordinary jobs. All of these have defined roles. In law, for example: judge, jury, prosecutor, defense attorney, court reporter, witnesses, defendant, and spectators. The police and the military wear costumes, perform set routines, and enact hierarchically defined roles. In medicine, doctors wear white jackets or scrubs as they perform prescribed procedures ranging from doctor talk to bedside manners. Nurses, clearly identified by their uniforms, assist the doctors and manage the patients. Patients, too, perform both while at a doctor's office and in the hospital. While in the hospital patients don gowns that make their bodies easily available for examination and treatment. Patients, no matter how important in the outside world, generally defer to the medical staff in the hospital. Salesmen have pitches

– advertising is all performance. In business, from mailroom clerk to CEO, people at every rank adhere to carefully crafted codes of behavior. Ordinary jobs such as waiting tables, bike messaging, garbage collecting, and many more are performed according to set routines. In fact, each profession and job has its own conventions, dramaturgy, choreography, architecture, and scenography.

- 5 In politics, candidates and office holders are “handled,” following carefully prepared scripts, dressing in clothes selected for them, made up, and microphoned (see figure 1.4e). Politicians often participate in photo-ops where they are photographed with the “right” people. Going off-script is both risky and profitable: the press jumps on flubs but politicians know that acting spontaneously can endear them to the public. The solution? To rehearse spontaneity. A novice politician but experienced pop performer, U.S. President Donald often goes off script, dismaying his handlers and outraging his opponents, but delighting his “base,” people who support him no matter what. It is doubtful that Trump rehearses spontaneity while another former media star, President Ronald Reagan, surely did.
- 6 In technology (see figure 1.4f): social media and mobile communication such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Snapchat, FaceTime, emailing, texting, and cell-phoning involve a complex set of behaviors which allows users to create various “avatars” or roles, making social life more complex by bringing people who are separate in space into close contact virtually. This technology is no longer the province of so-called



fig 1.4e. US President Barack Obama being prepped for a television interview with Chuck Todd of *Meet the Press* in the Cabinet Room of the White House in 2014. Even looking “natural” requires careful preparation. Official White House photograph by Pete Souza.

## WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?



**fig 1.4f.** Using cell phones in Bangalore, India, a global technology hub. Photograph by Victor Grigas/Wikimedia Commons.

“advanced” societies. Even in the poorest nations people use advanced technology.

- 7 In sex: dating, foreplay, love-making, and aftermath use role playing, fantasy, body ornamentation, the stimulation of all the senses, and a drama-like progression of events. Sex can also be playful, sometimes even a parody of itself. **Figure 1.4g** shows people enjoying a playful “orgy,” interacting with each other and with “lover earth,” literally.
- 8 In ritual, such as where a girl at her First Communion accepts the wafer; or where the Maharaja of Banaras, India, worships the boys who are Hindu gods in the Ramlila of Ramnagar, India, cycle play (**see figure 1.4h**). Religion depends on the performance of rituals such as celebrating the Mass in a Roman Catholic church, prostrating oneself in an Islamic mosque, and reciting the blessing over challah bread and wine to inaugurate the Jewish shabbat (to name a few of a myriad). There are also myriad secular rituals such as rising when a judge enters the courtroom, singing the national anthem, and blowing out the candles on a birthday cake. Or even simpler rituals such as shaking hands, hugging when greeting someone, or waving goodbye when parting. Animals also perform rituals.
- 9 In play: frolicking, masking, chasing, throwing-and-catching, pretending, teasing, gambling, con-games, and more. There are many varieties of play including but going beyond what children do (**see figure 1.4i**). Playing can get serious, even dangerous and dark. The whole world can be understood as a great game.



**fig 1.4g.** Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle cuddling artist Geoffrey Hendricks and two unidentified women in “Dirt Bed” (2012) at Grace Exhibition Space, Brooklyn, New York. Photograph by Geraldo Mercado.



**fig 1.4h.** The Maharaja of Banaras (standing with a camphor flame in his right hand) worshipping the boys who are the gods Rama, Sita, and Rama’s brothers (seated on the right) during the Ramlila of Ramnagar, India. Photograph by Richard Schechner.



**fig 1.4i.** Temporary children’s play area at the National Museum of Singapore. Photograph by Pablo Sanchez.