Performance Philosophy: an introduction

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ABSTRACT – **Performance Philosophy: an introduction** – This article introduces performance philosophy, despite the risk of performative contradiction such an act involves. First, it considers performance philosophy as a field that questions how performance thinks and thought is performed (including, specifically as *philosophy*). Drawing from Laruelle's non-philosophy, it then addresses performance philosophy as method, framing it as an alternative, performative paradigm to the philosophy *of* the arts approach that has historically dominated approaches to aesthetics. It concludes by affirming the call to the field to address the ethico-political dimensions of knowledge-production in not only disciplinary, but also geopolitical terms.
Keywords: **Performance Philosophy. Performance. Theatre. Philosophy. Performativity.**

RÉSUMÉ – **Philo-Performance: une introduction** – Cet article introduit la philosophie de la performance, malgré le risque de contradiction performative que comporte un tel acte. Premièrement, il considère la philosophie de la performance comme un domaine qui remet en question la manière dont la performance est pensée et pensée (en tant que *philosophie*). S'inspirant de la non-philosophie de Laruelle, il aborde ensuite la philosophie de la performance en tant que méthode, la présentant ainsi comme un paradigme alternatif et performatif de l'approche de la philosophie des arts qui a historiquement dominé les approches de l'esthétique. Il conclut en affirmant l'appel lancé sur le terrain pour aborder les dimensions éthico-politiques de la production de connaissances en termes non seulement disciplinaires, mais géopolitiques.
Mots-clés: **Philo-performance. Performance. Théâtre. Philosophie. Performativité.**

RESUMO – **Filosofia-Performance: uma introdução** – Este artigo introduz a filosofia-performance, não obstante o risco de contradição performativa que tal ato envolve. Primeiramente, considera a filosofia-performance como um campo que questiona como a performance pensa e como o pensamento é performado (inclusive, especificamente como *filosofia*). A partir da não-filosofia de Laurelle, dirige-se à filosofia-performance como método, recortando-a como um paradigma alternativo, performativo, alternativo para a abordagem da filosofia *da(s)* arte(s) que, historicamente, dominou abordagens para a estética. Este conclui por afirmar a chamada para o campo para a abordar a ética-política nas dimensões da produção de conhecimento não apenas em termos disciplinares, mas também geopolíticos.
Palavras-chave: **Filosofia-Performance. Performance. Teatro. Filosofia. Performatividade.**

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Prologue: performance philosophy 'in two or more places at once'[1]

For this article, Luciana Dias kindly invited me to take on the task of introducing *Performance Philosophy*: an emerging interdisciplinary and international field of thought, creative practice and scholarship open to all researchers concerned with the relationship between performance and philosophy, broadly construed[2]. That is, although the development of the field might be traced back to the identification of a 'philosophical turn' within *Theatre and Performance Studies* (in around 2008-2009) – in which researchers in that field seemed to be taking an increasing amount of interest in philosophy and engaging with it with a new found depth and focus – it later became clear that the growth of interest in the performance-philosophy relationship was a broader interdisciplinary phenomenon, coming from Philosophy and other disciplines including Dance, Music and Visual Art, as much as from Theatre and Performance; and as manifested not only in key publications, but also in a range of other activities including conferences, festivals, and special issues of journals. In 2012, I was one of a group of 11 people who founded a professional association and research network, also called Performance Philosophy, partly in recognition of the fact that the last fifteen years had seen this unprecedented surge of international and interdisciplinary interest in the performance-philosophy relationship. But at the same time, the launch of Performance Philosophy was also a kind of performative act in itself, insofar as it simultaneously sought to bring a new field into existence through the act of naming it as such.

Introducing the emerging field of performance philosophy is a complex task – not least because it is and has been from the beginning a collective enterprise. As my colleague Theron Schmidt has noted, it would certainly be a mistake to think that any *one* voice (such as my own) could encapsulate or speak for the field per se. As such, this introduction should only be read as one introduction amongst others; a partial account best considered alongside those that might perceive and articulate the field – its concerns, contexts, insights and limitations – in notably differing ways and through divergent vocabularies. Whilst perhaps it goes without saying, it still seems important to explicitly acknowledge and reiterate that my own account of or perspective on performance philosophy is by no means

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representative or exhaustive; it is not intended to be definitive and should not be taken to hold any more authority than alternate accounts existing elsewhere or yet to come[3]. Indeed, I hold strongly to the view that the great vitality of the field lies in its very multiplicity, mutability and openness to ongoing collaborative authorship (including in the form of a co-production that seeks to hold together disagreement and mutually exclusive positions).

There is an irony in seeking to stand outside performance philosophy in order to describe it; a performative contradiction in seeming to offer an explanation of or commentary on performance philosophy given the criticisms that myself and others have made of the 'philosophy *of* performance' approach. For others, and indeed for myself in other contexts, the more important and interesting work is to attempt to *do* performance philosophy, to produce an understanding of performance philosophy through practicing it. Indeed, as is the case in certain artistic research contexts, there may even be an impatience with the ways in which practices of 'talking about X' (be it artistic research or performance philosophy) can seem to take precedence over 'actually getting on with doing X' insofar as the latter may well prove more instructive or at least potentially less circular than the former. My deep ambivalence in writing an article such as this, then – which always seems at risk of positing a totalizing 'view from nowhere' or in performatively contradicting the very immanence of the field by seeking to describe it – is only offset by the counter-perspective that perhaps performance philosophy can benefit from a 'both-and' approach: not only always seeking to performatively produce itself consistently, but also to engage in temporary and provisional stagings of (self-)observation – which must be understood as part of itself and minimally performative in their own ways too[4].

Nevertheless, I am grateful to the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presença* for giving me this opportunity to reflect on the field at this particular moment in time: when it feels as though the principal organization and research network for the field, Performance Philosophy, is going through an important period of change and critical self-reflection. And indeed, this writing also comes at a time when the field itself has perhaps reached a certain degree of maturity – such that we might even allow ourselves to drop the notion of the field as 'emerging' rather than 'emerged', were it not for the value for many in continuing to consider it as

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somehow perpetually emergent, in process or unfinished (as has also been argued with Performance Studies and other areas). That is, this text has provided me with a welcome context in which to document a process (again, one amongst others) of what in English we might call 'taking stock'. This activity in itself is likely to expose some of the very problems that performance philosophy might want to address in terms of what counts, what can and cannot be counted or accounted for in these kinds of stock-taking practices. My reflections here perhaps inevitably give more weight to what has been said *about* performance philosophy – in the literatures that have been produced about it since its inception, for instance – rather than to how it has been multiply performed and enacted in a wide range of forms encompassing texts, but also embodied events, live and digital interactions, sounds, images and so forth. As a multi-sited, international and ongoing series of simultaneous events of thought – that are only sometimes documented in text or other forms – one simply cannot 'take stock' of performance philosophy.

Performance Philosophy: (in)definition, (a)disciplinarity & (alternative) institutions

What is performance philosophy?

Since it first emerged around 2011-12, the term and field of 'performance philosophy' has achieved (if that is the right word) a degree of recognition – both institutional and more widely communal – as an area of research. Writing in 2015, my North American colleagues Wade Hollinghaus and Will Daddario (2015, p. 51) described performance philosophy as still "a discipline, trying to determine what it is and what it can do", whilst Andrés Fabián Henao Castro calls it "a discipline in its first becomings" (Henao Castro 2017, p. 190). Despite its infancy, the field already has a professional association with 3000 members from more than 56 different countries, a journal, book series and biennial conference. As such, recent work has described performance philosophy as a field that is gaining 'momentum throughout Europe and North America' as "[...] an increasing number of scholars are bringing their perspectives to bear upon innovative approaches to performance and thinking practices" (Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 5). For his part, Alex Pittman (2016) notes the

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ways in which performance philosophy now operates as a contemporary 'heading' related to a community of "those who identify their work under that heading" (Pittman, 2016, p. 166). Whether or not they have been framed as such by their authors, we are now seeing some books being described as works of 'performance philosophy' (Pittman, 2016[5]; Goulish, 2014). Though there are also references to the idea of performance philosophy as a retrospective label or category – that might also be used to describe historical figures or practices '*avant la lettre*' (Lagaay, 2015).

To begin in the most basic terms – and mindful of the ongoing resistance of the field to asserting any essential definition of 'performance philosophy' per se – the current field of performance philosophy might nevertheless be initially characterised in a range of ways: by its contributors, its principle concerns and its activities – many of which have been facilitated by the international organisation also known as Performance Philosophy[6]. Contributors to the field – for instance – are international and interdisciplinary, including both academics and researchers working outside academic contexts or without institutional affiliations, including independent scholars and freelance practitioners[7]. They encompass researchers from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and working across a broad range of disciplines: most predominantly perhaps in Philosophy, Performance Studies, Theatre, Dance and Music, but also in Politics, Art History and Visual Culture, Cultural Studies, Literature and Creative Writing, and many more. In this respect, performance philosophy has sought to provide a 'home' for those who have found themselves 'between' disciplines like Philosophy and Performance, for artist-philosophers and philosopher-artists who have trained in and want to continue to practice both (often in the face of dominant narratives that insist we need to 'choose', to 'specialise'), and for those who produce work that moves across disciplines or otherwise challenges conventional classification.

Emphasising the partial nature of this account, the field has examined these concerns in and through multiple activities and projects – a good number of which have been initiated by the Performance Philosophy network since 2012, but many others of which could now be construed as linked to the field but initially arose independently of it. Currently, the network's main activities are to produce a book series, an open access online

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journal and a series of biennial events[8]. A research centre dedicated to the field – the *Centre for Performance Philosophy* – was founded at the University of Surrey in the UK in 2016.

Again, without any pretence of being exhaustive, I might also suggest that among its principle concerns, researchers in the field investigate a diverse range of issues, including (but by no means limited to) how ideas and practices from the fields of performance and philosophy can be productively brought together in ways that are invigorating and potentially transformative for both. Performance philosophy researchers are engaged in questioning the nature of the act of thinking itself; in terms of 'post-ideational thinking' (McKenzie) and thinking thought beyond the I/subject of thought. In this respect, there is concern with the nature of the relationship between forms of thought that include concepts, text and utterance, but also images, movements, sounds, affects, and material objects; as well as explorations of "notions of performance as a new paradigm for knowledge practices" (Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 7). There are researchers investigating the relationship between writing and performance, whether writing/text in performance, or philosophy as writing – including considerations of the question of the philosophy's media and the future role of the book. There are concerns with issues around the politics of knowledge: knowledge as a means of having mastery over the world; positing ideas of the 'site-specificity' of knowledge production versus universal knowledge as part of a continuation of the discourse around oppressive structures of knowledge/power. Work addresses how performative and philosophical practice might support the articulation of alternatives to identity politics including through the consideration of relationships between ontological and social difference, and the exploration of the production of the self/identity through performative acts, with respect to tensions between normative and experimental.

Amongst these myriad concerns, performance philosophy has taken a particular interest in the relationships between form, content and medium with respect to philosophy, theory and thought. As Anna Street has noted, 'the question of medium persistently takes center stage in the development of this venture called Performance Philosophy' (Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 97) – along with a desire to revisit what remain in many contexts the unquestioned standard forms for the how thought is shared – from the

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academic conference to the book. In this respect, Performance Philosophy as an organization has tended to share with groupings like the *SenseLab* in Canada (see Manning; Massumi, 2014, p. 90-98), a resistance to the 'communicational model' of thought in favour of a performative one – for instance, through an embrace of 'No-paper formats'[9]. This question of how philosophy is performed, including the forms of 'Theory' in the age of smart media has been particularly foregrounded by Jon McKenzie, who asks: "How will we perform or *do* theory in the twenty-first century? What role might Performance Philosophy play? And *must one do philosophy by the book?* Can it – and theory – survive their incorporation by *graphe*, by plasticity, by transmediation? How might they live on?" (McKenzie apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 84, emphasis added). In contrast, mainstream academic presses, in the UK and North America at least, seem to be dragging their feet over rethinking the possibilities of publication in the digital era[10].

In dominant approaches to Philosophy, at least in the Anglo-European sphere, there has been little consideration of questions of form. As Plato expert, MM McCabe has recently observed, for instance, Plato scholarship tends to focus on the supposed 'content' of the dialogues more so than on their dramatic form[11]. In turn, as Martin Puchner has emphasised, this lack of attention to form has enabled the continuing stereotype of Plato as a simply 'anti-theatrical' figure despite his ongoing commitment to the exploration of ideas in theatrical form. The field of performance philosophy, by contrast, has been one site in which researchers seeking to investigate the relationship between philosophical form and content have begun to congregate. Colleagues in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic have perhaps particularly advanced our understanding of these questions: through projects like *Philosophy on Stage* in Vienna. In many cases, this is a question of researchers coming from Philosophy or based in academic Philosophy departments looking to question how philosophy is practiced, taught, disseminated and so forth. These considerations have also been prominent in the biennial events hosted by the Performance Philosophy network since 2013. Originally referred to as a biennial 'conference', these events have become increasingly concerned with matters of form, format and structure – seeking to approach the 'conference' itself as performance: that which performatively produces

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events of thinking (rather than representing thinking already done elsewhere), and as a site of experiment for how thought might be performed beyond conventional academic formats. The call here is not to reject the standard academic conference paper as somehow necessarily pacifying or authoritarian – but it is a call for greater attention to the form called for by particular modes of thought and to consider formats like the 'paper' as one amongst others rather than the unquestioned default.

One of my own primary concerns in this area has been to foreground a methodological agenda: seeking to question, on both epistemological and ethico-political grounds, the primacy of a paradigm in which philosophy is applied to performance as an object of study (whether by Philosophy or Theatre and Performance Studies). As I'll expand on in what follows, I'd like to suggest that one aim of the field should be to approach the encounter between performance and philosophy *as a performative one* that transforms our understanding of both terms; but also by demonstrating how to enact such a performance philosophy *in practice*. How does performance think? How can philosophy think alongside performance (as a 'performance philosophy' rather than a philosophy *of* performance)? How can it create new thought *from* performance rather than merely applying ready-made concepts to it? How can we practice (what contemporary French thinker François Laruelle might call) a 'radical equality' in thought? What might it mean to take 'radical equality' as a demand for the performance of thought itself? In this way, as Street, Alliot and Pauker (2017) suggest, the rapid expansion of performance philosophy and the timeliness of its project may speak to a shared sense of urgency around the need to reinvent our knowledge practices in relation to the forms of thought they tend to devalue, marginalize or exclude – including arts-based knowledge[12].

Of course, an interest in the relation between performance and philosophy is nothing new in itself. As Nicolas Truong puts it in a recent interview with Alain Badiou, "Since their conjoined birth in Greece, theatre and philosophy have… lived like an old couple through 2,500 years of history" (Truong apud Badiou, 2015, p. 24). At times, it has been a tense relationship, as in the case of Plato and the apparent paradox that one of theatre's strongest critics should adopt the theatrical form of the dialogue to articulate his argument, dialogues which have gone on to be performed as

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theatrical works in their own right. At others, it has been a case of fairly unbridled mutual enthusiasm: as in Nietzsche's Schopenhauerian embrace of theatre – specifically Greek tragedy – as having the capacity to provide privileged insight into metaphysical reality and the subsequent ecstatic reception of Nietzsche by modern dramatists such as Strindberg and Eugene O'Neill (Kornhaber, 2016).

In this sense, I am not suggesting that these concerns – and particularly not when taken in isolation – are somehow unique to performance philosophy. Rather, as I suggested at the start, those who engage in performance philosophy may well do so alongside and in conversation with ongoing work in other fields where similar questions are being asked. And yet, what might be specific to performance philosophy is the opportunity the field affords to "pool resources" on such matters, but also to draw our attention to the politics and pragmatics of how that "pooling" is performed: how diverse knowledges might be brought into contact with one another without reproducing old hierarchies.

What is new though perhaps is the effort to bring together, to bring into conversation with one another, an otherwise dispersed and hitherto, somewhat isolated set of activities – based on the sense that they share a series of overlapping concerns, not only with what "proper philosophers" have had to say about theatre and performance or how philosophical theories might help us to analyse the performing arts (though this is part of it), but also with:

- the definition of these key terms: theatre, performance, philosophy, thought;

- the nature, function and possible forms or ways of doing philosophy (itself understood as a practice and potentially as a performative practice);

- with the various modalities in which 'thought' might be understood to take place – not only as the conscious act in the mind of an intentional human subject, but in terms of a thinking through the body or the doing-thinking of performance practice or a more impersonal idea of thought as that which produces a subject rather than being authored by a pre-existing "I", and even possibly a nonhuman thinking of the animal or even of so-called inanimate materiality;

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- the relationship between these modes and the thought we count as 'philosophical' – whether there is something distinctive about how theatre and performance think, for instance, relative to philosophy; what it might mean to think in terms of 'performance *as* philosophy'.

In this respect, Performance Philosophy is not just about interdisciplinarity for its own sake, but from the position that there might be something conceptually and perhaps even politically important about enabling performance research to make a contribution to wider debates as to our understanding of the nature of thought, and to explore alternative ways of relating to philosophy other than from the somewhat deferential position in which it considers itself the mere object or illustration of existing philosophical theories.

In terms of the organization, the founding conveners chose the name Performance Philosophy quite deliberately, avoiding the separation of the two terms by an 'and' or a hyphen or a slash, with a view to – we hoped – leaving open the question of the *nature* of the relationship between them. For some critics, like Martin Puchner, this gesture signaled a simultaneously naïve and dangerous ambition, namely: to fuse or unite performance and philosophy at the expense of acknowledging the profound and significant differences between them. Exhorting us to 'Mind the Gap', Puchner has said:

> What makes the study of theatre and philosophy interesting, even thrilling, is the very fact that the two are so utterly and irreconcilably different. It is the *and* that makes all the difference; it is the gap between theatre and philosophy that makes the study of their relation interesting, and even possible, in the first place. The study of theatre and philosophy should take its point of departure from this gap, and this gap should remain at the forefront of our inquiry (Puchner 2013, p. 543).

However, I would argue that much depends on what we mean by 'philosophy' and 'theatre' or 'performance' in this context – how they are being identified such that they can be declared to be so fundamentally distinct. For his part, when Puchner says 'philosophy' and 'theatre', he is referring to both understood as 'intellectual traditions' and 'academic disciplines' in their institutional setting, where, he suggests, philosophy has substantially more power and prestige attached to it than theatre and performance. And indeed, I would accept that the use of the term

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'philosophy' to designate an academic area of study or institutional department, has a specific history that one could contrast with the history of the use of the term 'theatre' in the same context. Indeed, it is clear that, in some contexts, the boundaries of what counts as "proper philosophy" are still rigorously policed – albeit that this can also involve the exclusion of some minority practices *within* philosophy as an academic discipline, as much as those originating in other disciplines altogether. Likewise, I am not proposing what would indeed be the misguided, imperialistic agenda to replace Philosophy and Performance Studies – as academic disciplines – with Performance Philosophy as 'one, shared field of inquiry' (which seems to be Puchner's concern). Rather, what I am disputing, is the idea that 'performance' and 'philosophy' are reducible to their institutional histories; that it is the academic or university context alone that conditions their respective identities. Performance and philosophy are much more than this. And indeed, partly on account of this excess, I am not sure that they have identities or essences at all, such that we could make any hard and fast claims about their distinction. And I am not alone in this view.

The problem with/of definitions

As I noted at the start, performance philosophy has been largely resistant to the practice of definition – either to defining itself or to defining its aggregate terms, 'performance' and 'philosophy'. Or again, the field has not sought to build a concept of performance philosophy on the nature of performance or philosophy, since it recognizes that neither term offers anything "stable or determinate that can act as a foundation" (Cazeaux 2017a, p. 34)[13]. This sense of instability is only further enhanced in this multi-lingual context[14].

In terms of philosophy, beyond generalized definitions of philosophy as 'rational enquiry concerned with establishing knowledge and truth', countless philosophers have sought to address the (philosophical) question par excellence – 'what is philosophy?' – returning with answers ranging from it is 'the creation of concepts' (Deleuze) to it is 'relearning to look at the world' (Merleau-Ponty). In turn, John Ó Maoilearca notes how for:

> [...] the Analytic philosopher, Ilham Dilman, genuine philosophy is concerned with how we think, are aware of our surroundings, speak and communicate, the nature of language, mathematics, the empirical sciences,

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psychology, sociology, and, of course, philosophy itself. It attempts to 'clarify' these topics, concerning itself with 'sense or meaning' all the while (Ó Maoilearca, 2019).

But with no consensus emerging, it seems that the fact that philosophy has neither a definite subject matter nor an approach specific to it contributes to its ongoing identity crisis. For his part, Jacques Derrida once remarked: "I must honestly say that now, less than ever, do I know what philosophy is ... It is as impossible to say what philosophy is not as it is to say what it is. In all the other disciplines ... there is philosophy" (apud Mullarkey, 2009, p. xvi). In turn, Judith Butler has recently said:

> I am quite sure that I do not define philosophy but rather accept philosophy as a field in which its definition is constantly contested. I think perhaps I am opposed to any definition of philosophy so that the field of contestation about its meaning and direction can remain open. So for me, philosophy takes institutional and extra-institutional forms, disciplinary and extra-disciplinary forms, and there seems to be no way around that situation. Nor should we be trying to find a way around it. Efforts to institutionalize what philosophy should be only produces 'another' philosophy, the one by which it is haunted. So where there is a definition of philosophy, there are a number of active ghosts on the scene. Perhaps it is important then that philosophy has become a scene of this kind, implicated in a problem of theatre' (Butler apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 220).

Performance philosophy scholars have also noted the distinct ways in which the term 'philosophy' might be heard in different national contexts, and the ways in which this might impact on the reception of the field. In this respect, we might perhaps consider adapting Sara Ahmed's (2017) approach to the question of feminism, by asking ourselves what it is we hear when we hear the term 'philosophy' (and why). Most commonly in my own contexts, I find myself having to contend with assumptions that philosophy is a dry, academic and desk-bound enterprise; something almost exclusively practiced by white Western men that reinforces a restricted canon of thinking produced almost exclusively by other white Western men (dead and alive). And indeed, given the ongoing issues with 'equality and diversity' in professional Philosophy (in the UK and US at least), some of these assumptions are clearly not ill-founded.

In terms of 'performance', this relates both to the multiplicity, interdisciplinary and experimental nature of performance in arts contexts,

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but also to the expansion and application of the concept of performance beyond the arts. Since the performative turn, and particularly the work of Performance Studies scholars like Richard Schechner, it has been argued that there is no limit to the events and behaviours that might be considered 'as performance'. Jon McKenzie suggests that "performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth" (McKenzie, 2001, p. 18). Indeed, it is worth noting that companies and corporations, for instance, frequently speak of having a "performance philosophy" – meaning something like a vision or policy for performance in the sense of the behaviour of individual employees and the organization. Performance here alludes to the achievement of goals and targets in effective and efficient ways; performance is something that is measured, managed and responded to as reward or punishment, from the extremes of bonuses to the devastating impact of an assessment of 'poor performance'. As McKenzie's work shows, and as the experience of those of us in increasingly corporate Universities makes plain, this sense of the term 'performance philosophy' cannot and should not be severed from the sense in which I am raising it here – although one might hope that it would be so critically and self-reflexively.

In this respect, if there is any emerging consensus in Performance Studies, it is that – as Shannon Jackson puts it – the term performance remains 'resolutely imprecise' (Jackson, 2011, p. 13). That is – whilst some, such as Marina Abramović continue to define performance and specifically performance art according to a simplistic opposition to theatre – where the former is real and the latter fake – my sense is that the majority of researchers are closer to RosaLee Goldberg's (2001) view that, "Any strict definition [of performance] would immediately negate the possibility of performance itself". In other words, it could be argued that it is precisely undefinability or a resistance to identity and identification, paradoxically, that defines performance as such. In this respect, a lack of identity or essence need not be seen as a bad thing – either for philosophy or performance. Articulated positively, this is simply another way of acknowledging their multiplicity or plurality and their ongoing transformation as processes rather than objects; their constant mutation and self-differentiation in relation to the other processes they encounter.

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Of course, this refusal of definition or the seeming aim of performance philosophy to maintain itself as a somewhat 'wild' or open field will leave it exposed to criticism in a similar manner to the critiques of Performance Studies by figures like Gay McAuley (apud Schechner, 2017)[15]. However, in this respect, perhaps it is less that performance philosophy wants to do away with discussions of definition than it seeks to draw attention to historic and ongoing dramas of definitional performance. Definitional struggles are constantly taking place on a variety of contemporary stages; the multiple identities of 'performance' and 'philosophy' are performatively produced in the context of a range of intersecting terrains – academic, professional, artistic, public – in ways that, to varying degrees, repeat and resist the conventions/traditions/habits/routines that might script them. As with all sites of identity production, the ongoing process of determining what counts as performance or philosophy, who counts as a performer or a philosopher, is a struggle between myriad forms of power, operating at various levels – individual, collective, institutional, social and so forth. So, when we ask, "what is performance or what is philosophy?" (as both the fields of Philosophy and Performance Studies might do), it is less a question of trying to arrive a consensus on 'essence' or 'necessary and sufficient conditions' and more a matter of attending to how definitional processes and/or the political dramaturgy of identity production is taking place in the particular contexts in which we find ourselves.

And like Performance Studies before it, performance philosophy has been resistant to the notion of disciplinarity. Indeed, Jon McKenzie has suggested that: "The challenges confronting Performance Philosophy resonate with those faced by Performance Studies in the 1980s and 90s: whether to become an integrated science, a discipline – or to somehow remain a revolutionary science, an always-emergent field" (McKenzie apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 123). Many of its most prominent advocates see PS's rebellious refusal to be pinned down, its very resistance to determine the boundaries of itself as a field as that which is core to its identity. For example, Diana Taylor states: "I find PS's very undefinability and complexity reassuring', whilst Lois Weaver describes PS as 'a safe house for those who can't go by the rules" (apud Schechner, 2017). For his part, McKenzie continues with the warning that: "If Performance Philosophy seeks to intervene primarily within the academy, it may well become a

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normalized science in doing so… If Performance Philosophy becomes preoccupied with legitimating itself through traditional forms, methods, and infrastructures, it will largely conform to dominant knowledge practices rather than challenge them. Or perhaps we can imagine and practice ways to be in two or more places at once" (McKenzie apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 123). Likewise, David Zerbib encourages the field to 'take advantage of a certain institutional autonomy' and to consider part of its role and function as being to propose 'alternatives to [extant] institutions' (Zerbib apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 336).

Beyond Application

One core area of concern in performance philosophy thus far has been to articulating critiques of and alternatives to the application paradigm in the relationship between philosophy and the arts. By 'application' we might mean: a tendency within the philosophy of art or in related fields such as art theory to use the work of art more as a means to illustrate a pre-existing set of ideas, than to generate new ones. It is to privilege a given idea of philosophical thinking over one of artistic thinking, rather than allowing the arts to expand our understanding of philosophy and of thought. When we think of application we may also think of: a rather one-way relationship between philosophy and the arts in which a concept is understood to change how we perceive the arts, but little reciprocal attention is paid to the capacity of the arts to change how we understand a concept.

In turn, we might want to acknowledge that the kind of parasitism that application seems to risk goes both ways insofar as artists might use philosophy to add conceptual weight to their practice, or adopt an illustrative approach to practice which places little faith in the creative process, form or event itself to generate unexpected thinking. Or again, as Esa Kirkkopelto (2015) has discussed, even if philosophy remains a very useful resource for artists to support the articulation of the performance – including, specifically, the very notion of performance as research, as a way of thinking, mode of inquiry or even as a kind of philosophy in itself – it can be that philosophy continues to serve as a legitimizing authority in such discourses. As Kirkkopelto puts it:

> Artists turning to philosophy and philosophers inherently risk remaining
> unilateral: such thinkers tend to be used as ultimate authorities, whose role in

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the discourse is to frame the area of questioning and to define its basic orientation. There is no question of criticizing or challenging Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Dewey or Wittgenstein through one's own humble practice! From the point of view of the artist, however, this kind of preliminary delimitation is deeply compromising. From the philosophical point of view, in turn, the relation itself remains *unphilosophical*. When, then, do artist-researchers really think philosophically? […] What is more important is to recognize the genuine nature, in other words the *philosophical bearing*, of the questions practitioners present to their artistic and academic communities as well as to a wider society (Kirkkopelto, 2015, p. 6).

In this respect, any renewed engagement by philosophers with performance might not be received as cause for celebration in and of itself; what matters (for performance practitioners and scholars) is *how* such engagement takes place. And indeed, I would like to suggest that there is an emerging consensus amongst researchers concerned with the relationship between philosophy and the arts that scholars must find alternatives to the mutual instrumentalization and disciplinary inequalities that arise from the application paradigm, or philosophy *of* the arts approach, that has historically dominated approaches to aesthetics and arts theory. Whether in relation to Music (Bowie, 2007), Film (Sinnerbrink, 2011; Mullarkey, 2009), Dance (Cvejić, 2015) or interdisciplinary arts practices (Manning; Massumi, 2014), contemporary philosophers and theorists are increasingly calling for a philosophy *from* rather than *about* the arts, insofar as the latter tends to reproduce the hierarchies between philosophy and the arts as modes of knowledge. At the heart of this call, for many, is the view that the arts themselves are philosophical, can do philosophy or can make an independent contribution to philosophy, above and beyond their capacity to serve as applications or illustrations of pre-existing philosophical ideas or examples used to justify ontological claims.

For example, the critique of application is intrinsic to the alternative model of 'research-creation' advocated for by Erin Manning and the *SenseLab*:

Given the research-creation context in which we were working, it would prove crucial to avoid not only the communication model but also any paradigm of 'application', whether it be practical results from existing research and design disciplines as applied by artists to their work in their own field, or conceptual frameworks as applied to art or technology by philosophers or other theoreticians. Concept-work could not adopt an

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external posture of description or explanation. It would have to be activated collaboratively on site, entering the relational fray as one creative factor among others' (Manning; Massumi, 2014, p. 90).

Likewise in dance-philosophy, Cvejić and others (Kunst, 2003; Clark, 2011) have been highly critical of the methodological issues in Badiou and Ranciere's treatment of dance[16]. For instance, Cvejić suggests that in both Badiou and Rancière's philosophies 'dance is relegated to a metaphor or, even worse, to an ahistorical conduit for a general ontology'[17]. In contrast, Cvejić calls for a "*dance-philosophy*", understood as 'a kind of thought which arises within the material practice of dancing' (Cvejić, 2015, p. 18). Unlike standard philosophical approaches to dance – as exemplified by Badiou and Ranciere – a dance-philosophy would be one in which "[…] the epistemic hierarchy is reversed: the stake is no longer in what philosophy could do for dance, but how an experimental, radically pragmatic orientation in dance offers a practical framework for theorizing perception, concept-formation and other philosophical issues" (Cvejić, 2015, p.18).

However, the value of a methodological approach 'beyond application' is by no means agreed by all working in or in conversation with performance philosophy. For example, philosopher of art Clive Cazeaux (2017b) has argued that the notion of escaping 'the two-term model in which philosophy is 'applied' to art or where art is offered as an 'illustration' of philosophy' relies on a problematic assumption of the capacity of art to produce its own philosophy. As he puts it, 'the idea that it might be possible to draw upon art's or philosophy's own immanent condition' to go beyond application 'relies upon the notion that either subject has *its own condition*'. For Cazeaux (2017b):

> […] this is a difficult concept to maintain given the interaction and borrowing that occurs between subjects, whether the basis for such interaction is taken as historical, e.g. modernist revolutions in the arts, or the philosophical claim that any concept necessarily opens onto its other.

In contrast, he proposes that we begin from the premise that art, including performance, and philosophy:

> […] are already mutually implicated, and use this understanding (a) to render problematic any attempt to discuss art and philosophy in simple, binary or immanent terms, and (b) to 'unfold' and to draw out the

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implications that are activated by a work of art that is offered in an art-philosophy context (Cazeux, 2017b).

Laruelle's non-philosophy as a model for performance philosophy

François Laruelle's non-philosophy seems an especially pertinent model for Performance Philosophy, in part, because of the way he characterizes non-philosophy itself: not as an abstract theory, but as an experimental practice – and specifically, in the case of his non-standard aesthetics, as an art. Experiment is key to non-philosophy as 'the manner of thinking that does not know *a priori* what it is to think' (Laruelle, 2012, p. 67) – as that which seeks to move beyond the application of thought to the Real, in favour of a practice that affirms the Real as that which produces thought performatively. Indeed, Laruelle characterises thought as "a style, a posture" (Laruelle, 2013, p. xxi), a bodily "stance" and as a matter of "comportment" (Laruelle, 2013, p. 23), in a manner that suggests a connection to the embodied arts of performance.

In turn, Laruelle's work aims to democratize or equalize the relationship that philosophy has to other forms of thought, including the arts. His non-philosophical project is an attempt to perform a qualitative extension of the category of thought without any one kind of thinking positioning itself as its exemplary form that, therefore, is in a position to police the inclusion and exclusion or relative status of other thoughts within the category. The discipline of Philosophy has often sought to play this authoritarian role, Laruelle claims. For Laruelle, standard philosophy involves the gesture wherein thought withdraws from the world in order to occupy a position of authority or power in relation to it. In his book *All Thoughts are Equal*, John Ó Maoilearca (2015) draws from François Laruelle's work to introduce the idea of "an equality (or democracy) in thinking" itself: not a thinking *about* or theorising *of* equality and inequality, but the notion of an equality or 'democracy of thought'. Leaving aside for now the doubts we may have about the seeming identification of equality and democracy here (given the persistent inequalities that actual democracies seem to sustain), what does this idea mean; what does it ask us to think? One way to approach it, is through the language of immanence: to consider Laruelle and indeed, Ó Maoilearca's thought as an experiment in the kinds of radical immanence that have also been pursued by thinkers

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like Deleuze, Nietzsche and Spinoza. In this case, the notion of equality is an ontological one that posits a fundamental oneness or immanence that admits of no hierarchy or separation between the nature of entities or beings. No thing is more or less real than anything else, we might say. And yet, the very nature of this ontology remains deliberately undefined or unspecified in Laruelle. This philosophy of immanence does not define immanence as difference or becoming, for example, as Deleuze does. In other words, Laruelle does not allow us to say that all entities are equal because they are X, or because they have X shared characteristic or quality. The concern, it seems, is that this stance still seems to presume too much authority for philosophy – to place itself in the position of telling us how things really are as if from a transcendent perspective outside that reality. In contrast, Ó Maoilearca suggests that Laruelle's notion of equality is a performative hypothesis, rather than an ontological claim. But if it is performative, then – we might ask – what does it do or produce? How does it act?

Performance as Philosophy or, How Performance Thinks

In arts contexts (or at least those I am familiar with), it is largely uncontroversial to suggest that arts practices are forms of 'thought' and/or ways of 'knowing'. Thanks in part to the institutional acceptance of the practice as research or artistic research paradigm in many national contexts, the idea that 'research' questions can be investigated and findings shared in and as performance alongside more traditional forms of investigation and publication is well established. Of course, long before the term 'practice as research' (and related concepts) became widely taken up, artists themselves already knew that what they were doing was thinking through performance.

And yet the idea that performance thinks or that one can think through performance remains 'radical' in other contexts, including in many philosophical ones. Erin Manning and Brian Massumi (2014) for instance sense the requirement to explicitly assert that: 'The practice that is philosophy has no exclusive claim to thought or the composition of concepts. Like every practice, its only claim is to its own techniques. For us, the techniques of philosophy are writing techniques' (Manning; Massumi, p. 2014, p. vii). On the one hand, of course, and given the problems of disciplinary inequality in the application paradigm, it is a highly welcome

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gesture to hear philosophers emphatically note that their goal is not to 'tell art how to think, or to tell dance how to understand itself' (Manning; Massumi, p. 2014, p. viii) – as so many other philosophies of art have done, intentionally or not. In turn, they say to themselves and others: "Don't just write *about* dance. As William Forsythe says, dance that thought around. Dance that choreographic thought around in philosophy's act of writing" (Manning; Massumi, p. 2014, p. viii).

In turn, it is a different claim again to say that performance is or does philosophy – given that the concept of 'philosophy' has an overlapping yet differentiated relationship to those of 'thought', 'knowledge' and 'research'. To speak in terms of performance as philosophy might mean to indicate the capacity of performance practices to raise philosophical questions – including those that might relate to conventional, recognised areas of Philosophy such as ontology, metaphysics, epistemology and ethics.

In certain philosophical contexts, the notion that 'performance thinks' can be met with objections: for instance, that there are *performers* who think, *theatre and performance-makers* who think and *audiences* who think, but that we cannot say that performance 'itself' (whatever that might mean) thinks. By this account, thinking is an 'internal' process that belongs to subjects, such as philosophers and performers. However, philosophers such as Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Stiegler, and Deleuze are part of an alternative tradition in philosophy which challenges this view that thinking originates in a discrete subject, proposing instead more relational models. Here, thought is understood as, for example, a performative event or 'encounter' between human and nonhuman bodies, or as a process extending beyond the objective body in forms of affective thinking (according to a more embodied version of the 'extended cognition' approach). In turn, performance research has considered examples such as the collaborative mode of thought that emerges *between* two or more performance-makers in the act of creating performance itself. Likewise, philosophers like Manning and Massumi are not alone in suggesting that creative practices are not merely an external manifestation of a thinking process that has already happened internally, because thought takes place through the moving body, in the relations between bodies (including nonhuman ones) and in specific spatio-temporal contexts. As they put it, in the context of a creative response to William Forsythe's choreographic

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practice: "There is no *having* ideas. *You* do not have ideas. The body itself, with its rhythmic milieu, *is* a motional-notion: a movement of thought. Dance that thought around" (Manning; Massumi, 2014, p. 45).

The claim that 'performance thinks' is still greeted with skepticism in some context; or with the expectation that the term 'thinks' appears in scare quotes, denoting an acceptance or admission that if indeed performance does something like thinking, then it is surely not the same type of thinking that philosophy does. To say that *performers* think, or performance-makers think, is perhaps less controversial – potentially uncontroversial even. But this is not quite the same claim or at least does not exhaust the nature of the claim I am seeking to explore here. That is, with or without an awareness of the artistic research paradigm, philosophers and scholars across the disciplines might well be willing to support the idea that those who make performance – and artists in general (leaving aside for now the question of those who might be seen as making or doing performance outside the domain of the arts) – are doing so thoughtfully, are using the production of performance as a means of exploring, generating, and communicating ideas and so forth.

On one level, this idea of thinking as having some kind of life of its own apart from us, will not seem that strange. We already know from Nietzsche, from Artaud as well as from Deleuze, that thinking is not grounded in an "I", a unitary self that constitutes its ground and origin. Rather, they suggest that thought is something that somehow passes through or across us, that is forced upon us from the outside rather than being authored inside out, or again, that thought occurs in various forms, at various speeds and with varying degrees of consciousness.

In this way, we are led to the conclusion that when performance itself thinks, it thinks *itself* – performances crack open the concept of performance, including those produced by philosophy. And yet, here again, perhaps the objection will be raised that while there is no problem – indeed, it is perfectly commonplace – to say that performance thinks, this is not the same as saying that it thinks *philosophically*. Why should we wish to erode the differences between how performance thinks and how philosophy thinks? Isn't it better for everybody to stick to what they are best at – for philosophers to do their thinking through the creation of concepts and artists to do their thinking through the creation of affects, as Deleuze and

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Guattari suggest – as long as we can all agree that no one kind of thinking is intrinsically better or more important than any other? Perhaps. But the risk of this view is that it implicitly leaves Philosophy (capital P) as the discipline that claims authority on the nature of thinking in general, beyond any specific instance as art or science for example. It seems to risk leaving Philosophy in its place as the discipline that claims to know what art is and how it thinks – in the guise of philosophical aesthetics; as well as leaving Philosophy free to maintain its own sense of identity not matter which subject matter it attaches itself to – from the philosophy of theatre & performance, to the philosophy of football or *The Simpsons*. Of course, our own position takes risks too – not least, the risk that the claim that 'performance philosophizes' appears entirely meaningless if we refuse to provide, in advance, a definition of philosophy (or a definition of performance, for that matter).

Conclusions: contributions and criticisms

As part of this process of taking stock, it seems worthwhile to consider both what the field might have been said to have positively achieved or offered, at the same time as reflecting on its limitations and the perspectives of its critics (including the field's internal acts of self-criticism). On the positive side, Kirkkopelto suggests that, in the context of the emergence of artistic research,

> Performance philosophy opens up a field in which performance, performance makers and performers can make contact with philosophical thinking without the advocacy of intermediary disciplines and in equal dialogue with them, learn to think in their own terms, and become understood by others. This is why it could, and often also should, constitute the most concrete form of thinking that 1) takes place at the very level of performance practice with its material, corporeal and institutional arrangements and the related power play or struggle these arrangements imply; 2) takes into account the wide range of research on these questions, but returns to that discussion over and over again on the level of the artistic medium; and 3) applies that medium in a way that indicates both the possibility of change and a way to bring it about in critical relation to the given institutional order of things (Kirkkopelto, 2015, p. 5).

However, from my perspective, one of the most important criticisms of performance philosophy as it has emerged thus far, has been to note the

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ways in which it has participated in the 'epistemological erasure of the global south' in terms of the performances and philosophies it foregrounds (Henao Castro, 2017, pp. 193-194). For instance, in a very fair and balanced review of *Encounters in Performance Philosophy* (2014) – one of the inaugural volumes of the Performance Philosophy book series – Andrés Fabián Henao Castro notes how in primarily citing European continental philosophy and Euro-USA performances, "[…] philosophy, performance, and their encounter, remain dominantly circumscribed in the geography of the global north, without such circumscription provoking much self-critique or methodological reflexivity". And at least in relation to my own first phase of trying to think through performance philosophy, Henao Castro is right to suggest that "the effort to undo the inequalities that organize the encounter' between performance and philosophy as *disciplines* was indeed largely being done 'at the expense of rethinking all the other inequalities pervasive in their histories" (Henao Castro, 2017, p. 193-194).

This Eurocentric perspective is embedded in the very narrative of the relationship between philosophy and performance too – which, most frequently, is cited as beginning with the 'ancient quarrel' between philosophers and thespians in *The Republic*. Likewise, the universalizing tendencies of Western philosophy have already been cause for concern for performance scholars focussed on particular bodies and the operations of social difference that (in)form their experience (DeFrantz, 2007, p. 189). Although clearly, there can be no simple opposition of Philosophy and Performance Studies in this regard, given critics like Rustom Bharucha's analysis of Schechner's ethnocentrism in the context of his intercultural theatre practice (Bharucha, 1984). Indeed, Bharucha suggests that Schechner's broad-spectrum is itself a universalizing gesture that fails to take the cultural difference of varying performance traditions into account: a homogenizing gesture of application in other words, rather than a qualitative extension or actual change to the idea of performance as determined by Western theatrical norms (Bharucha, 1984, p. 12)[18]. And certainly, the relationship between identity and difference, repetition and novelty remains philosophically unresolved in Schechner's model.

This is not about simply reinforcing the liberal humanist idea of philosophy as that which supports: "the ever-expanding enfranchisement of the marginalised into liberating (intellectual) activity" according to the

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recognition of some supposed 'commonality' (Ó Maoilearca, 2019). Rather, such critiques suggests that one role for performance philosophy, alongside the many of fields with which it shares concerns, is to consider how it will actively support an actual and ongoing *pluralization* of thinking and *equalization* of knowledges; how it will practice an ethics in thought built not on resemblance but difference, not quantitative expansion but qualitative mutation.

Notes

[1] I take this phrase from Jon McKenzie's recent discussion of performance philosophy's relationship to questions of institutionalization and specifically, institutional legitimacy (McKenzie apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 123). McKenzie also uses this notion to allude to the dual tendency of performance as both normative and resistant practice: 'Performance thus refers to the most normative and most experimental, even transgressive practices of contemporary life: it is in two places at once. How to think it? Yet this blur of instability has been the kernel or crystal around which I've built – and practiced – an impossible general theory of performance' (McKenzie apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 85).

[2] For this opening definition, I have amalgamated various existing definitions of performance philosophy as given in the introduction to the Performance Philosophy book series <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14558>, the Performance Philosophy journal <http://www.performancephilosophy.org/journal> and the Performance Philosophy network <http://performancephilosophy.ning.com>.

[3] For other introductions to the field, interested readers might look to *Inter Views in Performance Philosophy: Crossings and Conversations* (2017) edited by Anna Street, Julien Alliot, and Magnolia Pauker; to *Encounters in Performance Philosophy* (2014) edited by myself and Alice Lagaay; or to the inaugural issue of the Performance Philosophy journal (2015) edited by myself but encompassing contributions from a wide range of philosophers, artists and scholars. Whilst still Eurocentric, the forthcoming *Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy* edited by myself and Alice Lagaay tries to take some initial attempts towards a somewhat more global approach.

[4] And yet the concern remains: is this (kind of) article, in itself, precisely the kind of act of institutionalization and authorisation that McKenzie, for his part, suggests that performance philosophy should avoid?

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5   For example, Pittman says of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's *The Undercommons* (2013): "With its insurgent, cacophonous modes of thinking that so strain against the common sense of the present that I do not know what else to call it than 'performance philosophy'" (Pittman, 2016, p. 168).

6   Throughout this essay I will use the term 'performance philosophy' (without capitals) when I mean to indicate the field, method or idea of performance philosophy, and will use the term 'Performance Philosophy' (with capitals) in order to indicate the organization or research network of that name, founded in 2012. Likewise, I will capitalize the term 'Philosophy' when I mean to refer to the discipline and to 'philosophy' without capitals in order to indicate philosophical practices in a wider sense.

7   The research network Performance Philosophy currently has approximately 3000 members from over 56 different countries signed up to its website and mailing list.

8   And indeed, readers might get a sense of an important dimension of what performance philosophy 'is' (reiterating that it is many things) by participating in one of these events, as much as reading an introductory article such as this.

9   For example, for the SenseLab's first event *Dancing the Virtual* in 2005: "A ban was set in place as regards presenting already-completed work of whatever kind. This was not meant to imply that participants would enter as blank slates. On the contrary, they were encouraged to bring everything but completed work. They were encouraged to come with all their passions, skills, methods, and, most of all, their techniques, but without a pre-determined idea of how these would enter into the Dancing the Virtual event" (Manning; Massumi, 2014, p. 97).

10 As McKenzie explains: "Smart media are emerging scholarly genres that include video essays, theory comix, TED talks, and dozens of other media forms. These genres supplement the traditional scholarly genres of books and articles, and are emerging from popular culture, business, and academic contexts. In general, working in smart media involves thinking in interactive multimedia, presenting in new venues, and engaging new audiences… At a deeper level, smart media entail a massive redesign of our experience of knowledge, and a restructuring of its underlying architecture, for smart media open a new space for thought" (McKenzie apud Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 86).

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[11] I take these ideas from a contribution by MM McCabe to a recent performance philosophy workshop *On Dialogue* co-hosted by the Centre for Performance Philosophy, Surrey and the Centre for Philosophy and the Visual Arts at King's College London in April 2019.

[12] See Street et al: "More than a mere research experiment, this work responds to an urgency made manifest by the expansion of Performance Philosophy – an urgency to reinvent knowledge practices in order to address and create conditions of possibility for what is too often marginalized in Western scholarly discourse: intuition, emotion, gestures, plurality, discord. From across continents and disciplines, the texts featured here celebrate this diversity, inviting us to think and work together through performative acts' (Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 21).

[13] Here I am adapting the useful work that UK-based philosopher, Clive Cazeaux (2017a) has done on the concept of 'artistic research' and its relationship to the definition of art in his recent book.

[14] Likewise, in addressing the relationship between Performance Philosophy and the French context, the editors of *Inter Views* note that: "No truly equivalent translation of the word 'performance' exists in the French language" (Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 6). However, they then go on to suggests that "[…] this is beside the point, for, as Derrida pointed out in his exchange with Searle, French thought overflows with performative characteristics and exuberant affinities to artistic and theatrical practices, emphasizing medium over and above content" (Street; Alliot; Pauker, 2017, p. 6).

[15] See McAuley (apud Schechner 2017, p. 38): "There is a tendency in performance studies to cast the net wider and wider, accepting an ever-expanding range of performance practices as legitimate objects of study. While such openness has its attractions, there are problems with the notion of a 'field without limits'; it seems to me that even though understandings of what constitutes performance may differ from culture to culture over time, we do need to define with some care what we mean by it here and now. My own rule of thumb has been that for an activity to be regarded as performance, it must involve the live presence of the performers and those witnessing it, that there must be some intentionality on the part of the performer or witness or both, and that these conditions in turn necessitate analysis of the place and temporality which enable both parties to be present to each other, as well as what can be described as the performance contract between them, whether explicit or implicit". In contrast, and as I have discussed with respect to Anglo-

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American philosophy of theatre, we might also note the ways in which even these minimal attempts at definition are circular with respect to counter-examples.

16 See Cvejic's critique of Badiou and Ranciere on dance primarily in terms of lack of engagement with actual dance practice: "Although Badiou's and Rancière's views on dance differ to the extent that their philosophical projects are politically and epistemologically different, they share a familiar methodological habit: their approach bypasses works of dance by mainly focusing on literary or cinematic sources that mediate dance or bodily movement. In both cases, Mallarmé's writings on dance figure is a significant reference (Mallarmé 1956). Whereas Rancière occasionally invokes concrete works (Lucinda Childs' Dance from 1979, for example) because his thesis on the aesthetic regime of art must be situated historically with a hint of analytical examples, for Badiou dance doesn't exist empirically, in the history of its practice, works, techniques, names and bodies (the only dance-related names being Mallarmé and Nietzsche). In fact, Badiou explicitly discloses his 'mission' to speak of 'dance not though on its own terms, on the basis of its history and technique, but of dance such *as it is given welcome and shelter by philosophy*" (Badiou, 2015, p. 63, my emphasis). Dance appears as nothing more than an instrument of a philosophical exercise – a new 'metaphor' for probing Badiou's familiar subtractive ontology of event and thought. Therefore, we are compelled to make a binary decision, just like Badiou's event requires of its subjects: to either read this essay figuratively, as a specimen of the philosopher's conception of art and aesthetics, divorced from any historical and practical concerns of the art of dance, or to take Badiou's metaphor 'seriously' and envisage the dance that would ensue from his axioms. In a recent critique of Badiou, Jonathan Owen Clark has demonstrated how measuring the latter with the former register, namely, Badiou's theory from the viewpoint of the history of dance with his claims of 'inaesthetics', reveals difficulties in his philosophical arguments (Clark, 2011).

17 Erin Brannigan (2019) advances these debates in intriguing ways by seeking to encounter Badiou's controversial essay 'on its own terms… in order to avoid the indignant tone' that she locates in other responses to Badiou's text by dance studies scholars. "If it is the case that dance is 'instrumental' for the art-philosophy schema that Badiou is formulating, that is, being 'incorporated' into the strategies of a philosophy of art, what's in it for dance? Can Badiou's project be repurposed for our own disciplinary concerns? For instance, if his

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conception of dance (drawn from past philosophical accounts and for his own purposes) is seen as lacking from a disciplinary perspective, then what is the idea of dance that positions his as 'wrong'?".

[18] As Bharucha (1984, p. 12) puts it: "Underlying Schechner's method in applying theoretical models to differing performance traditions is his faith in 'universals'. In *Drama, Script, Theatre, and Performance*, he emphatically states: 'It is my belief that performance and theatre are universal, but that drama is not' (Schechner 1977, 60)".

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