



**University of Brighton**



9th *Art of Management & Organization* Conference 2018

Hosted by the University of Brighton Business Faculty, Brighton, East Sussex, UK

30<sup>th</sup> August – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018

The 2018 *Art of Management and Organization* conference calls for exciting and innovative streams, performances, papers and exhibitions focusing on the theme of

### **Performance**

‘..... the very obligation and profitability of appearing always in a steady moral light, of being a socialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who is *practised in the ways of the stage*’.

(Goffman, 1959: 243-244)

“The skill of the actor is assessed in terms of the extent to which his/her performance communicates appropriate emotions to the audience; that is, the extent to which the audience is *moved or transported*.”

(Höpfl and Linstead, 1993:76)

‘Performance’ is one of the most deployed words in contemporary society, extending well beyond the workplace. Whilst it may be simply defined as “the accomplishment of a given task against preset known standards of accuracy and completeness” this barely scratches the surface of what it means to perform adequately in a world where conditions and competition vary; the “given” element of the task may in fact be emergent, or depend on emergent factors; and included in the expectations is the assumption that the boundaries of performance possibility will be pushed back. To perform means to exceed. High performance means risk. It is no longer good enough to be “only as good as your last performance” – now you are only as good as your *next*. Every aspect is monitored and measured, often by the person performing the task themselves, including intangible and invisible aspects. The spotlight is unrelenting. Anxiety is normal; stress is a given. And if it all becomes too much, it is a problem of the individual to cope with, a question of their resilience and “wellness”. They are performers – they should train, develop physical and mental skills, manage their own personality and subjectivity, practice and rehearse, be ready to improvise at a moment’s notice, and if it isn’t “all right on the night” they will suffer sanctions.

But another take on performance views it as a social drama. The dramaturgical metaphor, drawn from the work of Kenneth Burke and Erving Goffman, and developed in organization studies by Iain Mangham and Michael Overington (1983,1987), is a familiar one in the workplace since the 1980s. Goffman drew attention to the importance of “impression management” in interactions, involving the framing of interaction, timing and sequencing, the utilization of ritual and pattern, and the management of meaning – the meaning of social interaction is *staged*. Social performance requires analytic, technical and interpretive skills, including the ability to work with others in an ensemble and *with* an audience (Beeman 2002). Several other writers have tried to make sense of organisational

behaviour, leadership, team-work, discourse and relationships by drawing on the world of theatrical performance. But as Mangham and Overington (1983: 221) have pointed out, people are not mere performers but are *actors* who play *characters*, moving from character to character and audience to audience with a 'theatrical consciousness' which enables them to retain a concept of an *acting self*. Moving from one role to another and using it to take a perspective on the previous one is a form of reflexivity which can have a *critical* dimension in exposing the mystifications involved in playing and interpreting "roles" – and enabling demystification to occur. Hopfl and Linstead (1993) also examined the burdens that playing a role may place of the "self", and the consequences of the failure of the "mask".

The concept of social drama was developed by Victor Turner (1974, 1986), best known for his work on liminality, and picked up more recently by Dwight Conquergood (2013) in his concept of *cultural performance* which is applied to urban settings of deprivation and poverty as well as more traditional anthropological settings. Norman Denzin, too, takes anthropology into the heartlands of modern dispossession in his development of *performance ethnography*. These concepts have provided the warp and weft of the recently developed multidisciplinary field of *performance studies* crossing theatre, education, anthropology, sociology, and more recently still, *performance philosophy*. Organization studies has flirted with theorizing theatre practice itself (Jeffcutt et al 1996) and the work of Taylor (eg 2015, premiered at the 2014 Copenhagen Conference) provides an ongoing creative output that tackles organizational thinking in performance formats. There are also several examples in both literature and consultancy practice of the use of theatre and performance techniques on addressing organizational problem areas.

It would also be remiss for us not to remark on the emergence of the concept of *performativity* in the work of Lyotard (1985) and Butler (1990) which has addressed both the structural dynamics of performance and the consequences they have for identity – performance creating the actor, rather than the reverse. This has led to a more recent proposal of the controversial idea of *critical performativity* in organizations that is still hotly contested (Spicer et al 2009)

***We wish to encourage participants to address such questions as***

- if there is a significant level of 'performing' taking place in the workplace as people seek to live up to standards of accuracy and completeness what, then, does the notion of performance have to offer us in order to strengthen our understanding of what is happening?
- are there skills and strategies used in performance which may offer us solutions to the problems associated with, for example, status, vulnerability and lack of self revelation in the workplace?
- what other types of performance can give us a deeper insight into the darker or hidden sides of organisational life?
- what role do creative performances have in studying everyday performance?

The 2018 *Art of Management and Organization conference* invites you to use the word 'performance' as a catalyst for creative ways to explore and better understand the complexity of working life – including our need to 'succeed'. Researchers, practitioners, consultants, artists, performers, educators and professionals are warmly invited to contribute to this dynamic event, where we will explore the confusion and ambiguities of the historical and contemporary workplace. We propose to encompass a diverse and inspired range of approaches falling under the general theme. For example:

- Theatre, including mime, monologue, improvisation etc
- Music, including singing, improvised music and all genres
- Art, including cartoons, graffiti etc

- Poetry, including rap, blank, rhyming, Haiku etc
- Dance, including traditional, modern and all genres
- Image, including photography, film, documentary and animation
- Narrative and storytelling
- Affect and emotion, theory and practice

**This list is not exhaustive!** Participants are encouraged to put their own interpretation on 'Performance' in the context of the art of management and organisation. Whilst we invite proposals for streams and panels of normal academic paper presentations (for which a separate call will be made when streams are determined) we also invite you, whatever the type of submission (streams, exhibitions, installations or performances) to be creative, and don't be afraid to be bold!

## References

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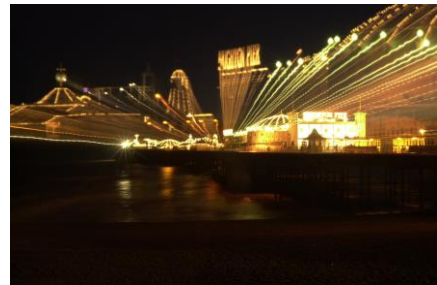
**Deadline for Stream Proposals: Friday 26 May 2017**



*As reported in Time magazine, 12 January 1931. [Before moving his stage tour on to Brighton, film star and singer Maurice Chevalier had been refused permission to sing in Cardiff because his manner was flirtatious and his songs, being in French, suggestive. "In Brighton any man can sing anything - well almost anything - in any language he knows."]*

(Unidentified Brighton 'Alderman')

Brighton is recognised nationally and internationally as a successful, dynamic conference destination, combining a seaside location with an effervescent city atmosphere. Despite its compact dimensions, Brighton pulsates with the energy and vibrancy of a large city. It's not just the sea with a summer sparkle and superb sunsets, it's also the amazing shops, the extraordinary royal palace, the historic Lanes, the seaside pier, the fascinating museums, the elegant Regency architecture and arts and culture galore that combine to create such a vibrant and inspiring place to hold a conference. Brighton is fully accessible from the rest of the UK and Europe with London Gatwick Airport only 30 minutes away and London less than an hour away (by direct train). It is easy to explore Brighton on foot, making all the logistics of planning an event much easier and hassle-free. In addition to this, Brighton has a history of warm hospitality – we've been welcoming visitors for hundreds of years!



#### **About the University of Brighton and the Business School**

The University of Brighton is a UK university of over 20,000 students and 2,500 staff based on five campuses. The University is defined by a commitment to social relevance, steering our curriculum and research projects away from the ivory tower and toward the fulfilment of public good as a trusted partner. This not only involves active engagement with a local and global community but includes a coordinated effort toward creating an equal and sustainable environment within the university. This is based on the shared values of engagement, diversity, participation, collaboration and sustainability.

Brighton Business School teaches and conducts research and consults on a wide range of business topics, including accounting, economics, finance, management, human resource management, marketing and law. It has approximately 2,500 students and 120 staff members. The Brighton Business School is ranked as a top 5 university for world-leading research impact in Business and Management Studies according to the Research Excellence Framework 2014. Brighton Business School have organised and run a wide range of conferences and events over the last ten years, including The European Marketing Academy (EMAC); British Academy of Management (BAM); Work, Employment and Society (WES); and the University Forum for Human Resources Development (UFHRD). We have an experienced team that has close connections with trusted conference partners in Brighton including the Brighton Centre, Corn Exchange and VisitBrighton.

**For more information please contact [aomo2018@gmail.com](mailto:aomo2018@gmail.com)**

**More information can be found at [www.artofmanagement.org](http://www.artofmanagement.org) and on Facebook and Twitter @Ao\_Management**