

**Irish Society for Theatre Research**  
**Online Conference 2021 at QUB**  
**'Hard Graft: Performance, Labour and Value'**  
**Queen's University Belfast | May 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021**  
**Convened by Dr Aoife McGrath and Dr Shonagh Hill**

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The annual conference of the Irish Society for Theatre Research considers the intersection of performance, labour and value. How is labour valued in theatre and performance scholarship and practice? Whose labour gets recognised, and whose labour remains invisible? The conference considers these questions along two interrelated tracks: the external, societal/institutional values placed on performance practices, texts, artists and research; and the value systems in operation within theatre and performance practice and scholarship.

**Keynote Speakers and Featured Artists:**

- Dr Mojisola Adebayo (Queen Mary, University of London/University of Potsdam)
- Dr Broderick Chow (Central School of Speech and Drama)
- Janie Doherty (Dance Artist, Northern Ireland)
- Joan Davis (Dance Artist, Ireland)
- Dr Royona Mitra (Brunel University)
- Dr Aoife Monks (Queen Mary, University of London)
- Paula O'Reilly (Dance Artist, Northern Ireland)
- Professor Brian Singleton (Trinity College Dublin)
- Dr Mary Wycherley (Dance Artist, Ireland)

Registration: <https://istr.ie/istr-2021-registration/>

Day rates are available: £10 students/unwaged/precarious employment, £20 full-time employment

Schedule: <https://istr.ie/istr-conference-2021-schedule/>

**Participation Note:** We realise that some of you may be in a caring role working from home, and that babies and children, or other people being cared for, may need to be in the frame for this online conference. All caring "extras" are very welcome! Breastfeeding and bottle feeding are very welcome, and please feel free to turn your camera off for feeding, or any other caring duties, if you prefer – whatever is most comfortable for you.

**FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup> May**

10.00– 10.30 Conference Welcome and Presidential Address

Marie Kelly (UCC, ISTR Co-President), Aoife McGrath (QUB, ISTR Co-President, Conference Convenor), Shonagh Hill (QUB, Conference Co-Convenor)

**10.30 - 11.30 Panel Session 1**

**Panel 1: (In)Visible Performances of Socio-Economic Statuses: Tracing Representations of Women's Labour and Class on Irish Stages (curated panel)**

**Chair: Rhona Trench (IT Sligo)**

- Salomé Paul (TCD), Labour and Class as a New Pattern to Tragedy? Marina Carr's *By the Bog Cats*...
- Fiona Charleton (UCD): The Invisibility of Women in the Workplace in 1930s Ireland: Frustrated lives. Teresa Deevy's *Katie Roche*.
- Clara Mallon (NUIG): (De)Constructing the Gendered, Classed and Laboured Body in Pat Kinevane's *Underneath*

## **Panel 2: Audiences and Theatrical Form**

### **Chair: Shonagh Hill (QUB)**

- Moonyoung Hong (TCD), *The Spatial Politics of Site-Specific Theatre in ANU's The Party to End All Parties* (2020)
- Ciara Murphy (NUIG), "You Can Leave At Any Time" – Interrogating the Invisible Labour in Co-Creating the Audience-Performance Contract.
- Emma Bennett (UCD), *Narrative Accounting and Theatrical (Self) Worth in Oisín McKenna's Admin.*

**11.30 - 11.45 Tea break. Screening of Paula O'Reilly/Tinderbox, *Tea* (2019).**

### **11.45 – 12.45 Panel Session 2**

## **Panel 3: Socially Engaged and Applied Practice**

### **Chair: David Grant (QUB)**

- Michael Finneran (MIC, UL), *Grafting hard in socially applied practice: Locating labour within an ecology of Irish theatre*
- Courtney Grile (TCD), *Applied Drama: Working toward an Ideology of Applied Drama*
- Aisling McCormick (QUB), title tbc.

## **Panel 4: Empathy and Emotional/Affective Labour**

### **Chair: Mark Phelan (QUB)**

- Harrison McCallum (UU), *'Utopian Performatives' for Peace: A Radical Approach to Evaluating the Value of Documentary Theatre in Northern Ireland*
- Jesse Weaver (UCC/Abbey Theatre), *Invisiturgy: The Hidden Labour of the Dramaturg and Playwright Relationship in Processes of New Play Development and Production.*
- Eva Urban-Devereux (QUB), *The value of performing labour solidarity against reification: 1932: The People of Gallagher Street*

### **12.45 – 14.00 Lunch. You have 2 options:**

1. Social lunch open to all: partners, family members, flat mates, children, pets – all welcome in the frame!
2. 12.45 – 13.15 New Scholar's Lunch: Senior Scholar Q&A with Dr Fintan Walsh (Birkbeck), Senior Editor of *Theatre Research International* (CUP). Hosted by ISTR Postgrad Reps Moonyoung Hong (TCD) and Claire Keogh (TCD).

Followed from **13.15-14.00** by the general social meeting for all Postgraduate and ECR members and delegates.

### **14.00 – 15.00 Keynote 1: Dr Aoife Monks (Queen Mary)**

#### **'Costume is a Crime: Wastefulness, Women and Backstage Labour'**

This paper asks what costume work is for and who it serves. Despite costume's apparent status as a visual medium, it is often overlooked when critics, scholars and other theatre workers think about the theatre. Frequently dismissed as 'women's work', costume begs the question of why and how work is gendered at the theatre. This paper examines how costume work's relative invisibility can be understood through theatre's own anti-theatrical anxieties about wastefulness and ornamentation.

Taking as its cue from Alfred Loos' 1908 modernist essay, 'Ornament and Crime', this paper situates the enthusiastic denunciation of ornamentation by (usually male) modernist thinkers within the

longer history of craft theory, and within the development of labour relations at the theatre during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I connect this history to the specific case of Irish dance costume, where I consider the shift of Irish dance dress – and the virtuosity of its dancers – from the commercial stage to amateur competition, to argue that women’s work itself became seen as ornamental and decorative in Ireland during the Celtic Revival.

I end by asking who or what costume work serves and whether ‘service’ is the only way that costume work can be valued.

### **15.00 – 15.30 Coffee Break / Movement workshop**

### **15.30 – 16.30 Panel Session 3**

#### **Panel 5: Digital Transformations during the Global Pandemic**

##### **Chair: Kurt Taroff (QUB)**

- Fintan Walsh (Birkbeck), The Work of Mourning in Pandemic Times
- Ann White (Michigan State University), U.S. Actors’ Unions and “Theatre” in a Pandemic: SAG-AFTR Vs. AEA 2020
- Fiona Fearon (DKIT), Reflections on an Online Year of Performance – the Simple, Mass and Socially Distanced Audience

#### **Panel 6: Navigating Precarious Employment**

##### **Chair: Ciara Murphy (NUIG)**

- Annalies Van Asche (Ghent University), A Thin Line. Balancing Autonomy and Precarity in the Symbolic Economy of the Arts
- Emily Goodling (Stanford) and Lianna Mark (Kings College London), “Be Yourself, Inasmuch As It Suits the Job”: The Labour of ‘Authenticity’ at Berlin’s Maxim Gorki Theater and London’s Royal Court

### **16.30 – 17.30 Keynote 2: Mojisola Adebayo (Queen Mary University of London/University of Potsdam), Broderick Chow (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London) and Royona Mitra (Brunel University, London):**

#### **‘Weather, Whiteness, Work’**

When we gathered for the first time to discuss our response to this keynote invitation and the conference theme, “Hard Graft: Performance, Labour, and Value”, it all came pouring out. Weeks, months, years of stories about what it is to be Black and / or a person of the Global Majority in the academy—we laughed at the time but the sheer volume of it all was overwhelming. How do we productively understand such experiences beyond simply listing them, like the wall of collective experiences in the open letter [“White Colleague Listen!”](#) by the Revolution or Nothing network? How do you theorize a microaggression? How do you theorize the constant background noise of racial slights, insults, and minimizations that is just there, like weather? We take the lead here from Christina Sharpe’s foundational formulations: “the weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and that climate is antiblack” (2016, 104)).

As ways to weather racism in the academy, we offer possibilities of hope, nourishment, and joy in the coming together and organising of Black and Global Majority collectives as the “work” that we must undertake to enable more just futures for our next generations. Unlike “White Colleague Listen!”, this collaborative presentation is not an open letter—there is little here for white people to learn from. It is instead intended as a coalition towards a collective and reparative act: to adopt a

phrase from bell hooks, in writing and speaking together, we may see “a location for healing” (1991, 1)

**20.00 – 21.15: Performance Event. Screening of *In the Bell's Shadow* (2015), a film by Mary Wycherley and Joan Davis.**

Time, labour, craft, and the celebration of a life's work in dance, *In the Bell's Shadow* is a collaboration between screendance director Mary Wycherley and contemporary dance pioneer Joan Davis. '*In the Bell's Shadow* weaves body and symbol through vast and intimate landscapes in a sensuous interplay of humanity and nature. Poetic turns and abstract narratives intensify as this surreal episodic journey vividly explores cycles of life and decay in a world defined by the senses. [...] Audiences will be transported to another world for the 75-minute duration of this exquisite work.'

**Trailer:** <https://vimeo.com/153254026>

Film Director and Editor: Mary Wycherley

Movement Director/Co-ordinator: Joan Davis

Producer: Niamh Mac Cárthaigh

Soundscape and Composer: Jürgen Simpson

Cinematographer: Eleanor Bowman

Art Director: Sonia Haccius

Costumes: Martina Garner

Featuring the Irish Chamber Orchestra

Performed by Joan Davis, Maggie Harvey, Henry Montes, Mary Nunan, Simon Whitehead and Nicholas Twilley

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**SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup> May**

**10.00 – 11.00 Working Group Meetings**

1. Applied Theatre
2. Gender Working Group

**11.00 – 11.15 Tea break. Screening of Paula O'Reilly/Tinderbox, *Tea* (2019).**

**11.15 – 12.15 Panel Session 4**

**Panel 7: Labours with the Past**

**Chair: Siobhán O'Gorman**

- Amanda Finch (UU), Authenticity, experiments and radical new perspectives: complex relationships of value in 21st century cross-gender Shakespeare
- Sharanya Murali (Brunel), File Room: Archival labour as performance in Dayanita Singh's Museums
- David Clare (MIC, UL) and Nicola Morris, The Transnational Roots of Key Figures from the Early Years of the Gate Theatre, Dublin

## **Panel 8: Precarious Working Conditions**

**Chair: Marie Kelly (UCC)**

- Miriam Haughton (NUIG), Theatre57: 'Female, Mid-30s, No Children, College-Educated, €512 on rent'
- Ali Fitzgibbon (QUB), The devaluation of the artist in professional theatre as a devolution of policy: A study of the separation of theatremaking from theatre business
- Carole Quigley (MIC, UL), Artist or Engineer – who created the iPhone?

## **12.15 – 12.30 Coffee Break**

## **12.30 – 13.30 Panel Session 5**

### **Panel 9: Invisible Labour and Value**

**Chair: Trish McTighe (QUB)**

- Kate McCarthy (WIT) and Jennifer Mahoney (WIT), Framing the ethics of “invisible labour” in performance practice and research
- Eimer Murphy (Abbey Theatre), On making a ceramic vagina prop for *This Beautiful Village*
- Martin Kenny (NUIG), “We’re not willing to destroy ourselves” – rendering queer labour visible/invisible in production

## **13.30 – 14.00 Social Lunch / Ex Comm Lunch Meeting**

## **14.00 – 14.30 Book Launch Celebration**

Celebrating recent publications of ISTR members.

- Shonagh Hill, *Women and Embodied Mythmaking in Irish Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Marie Kelly, Siobhán O’Gorman, Áine Phillips (eds.), ‘Performance and Ireland’ – Special Double Issue – *Scene*, Volume 8, No. 1 & 2. (Intellect, 2021).
- Kelly Freebody and Michael Finneran, *Critical Themes in Drama: Social, Cultural and Political Analysis*, London: Routledge, 2021.

## **14.30 – 15.30 ISTR A.G.M and 2021 Awards Announcement**

## **15.30– 16.00 Coffee Break / Movement Workshop**

**16.00 – 17.00 Keynote 3: ‘States of Play: an interview with Professor Brian Singleton (Samuel Beckett Chair of Drama and Theatre, TCD) on labour and value in the neoliberal university’**

## **20.00 – 21.00 Performance Event**

**Performance Artist and Choreographer, Janie Doherty (Derry), in Conversation with Tanya Dean (TU Dublin). Including screened excerpts from Doherty’s work *Politics of Comfort* (2020).**

‘Politics of comfort is inspired by all women who are caregivers. It is a multimedia performance using film, sound score and live performance. It is inspired by Northern Irish culture and how we give comfort in a post conflict society. It is a close-up examination of the women who held it together as life was falling apart.’

**- End -**