

IFTR WG Performance, Religion and Spirituality

WG Mission Statement

The PRS working group seeks to examine the interconnection between the forms, institutions, practices, traditions and impulses of religion, spirituality and theatrical performance. We seek ways of examining how performance and spiritual life have come into conversation, cooperation and conflict, both historically and in the present.

We wish to place our work at the intersection of the scholarly traditions of theatre studies and the study of religion. Both are committed to the critical inquiry of their material, and both are committed the joint participation of scholars from all corners of the world. This group is open to members from all national and cultural backgrounds, and it interests itself in the world's religious, spiritual, and performative traditions.

Spirituality, religion and performance are, in our view, sets of social and cultural practices that have a profound and long-lasting importance to those involved in them. Because these practices are so important, we are committed to a nonsectarian inquiry of them. We assume no particular faith or religious affiliation for our members or our work.

Topics of interest might include (but are not limited to):

- The use of performance within religious practices (i.e., ritual or spirituality) and its relationships to secular performance
- The relationship between religion and spirituality, and the ways in which performance may be useful as a tool in negotiating it.
- The interactions between structures of religious institutions and theatres, politically, economically, or legally
- The performative techniques used by religious or spiritual practitioners to make a sense of spirituality manifest
- The political and community-building work of religious, spiritual and aesthetic performances.
- Traditions of religious antipathy towards the theatre, and vice versa
- The secularity of performative aesthetics and ways in which this has been challenged
- Attempts to bridge religious divisions by means of performance
- The nature of the theatrical spectator compared to the religious worshipper or congregant, as well as the theatrical performer as compared to the spiritual practitioner or celebrant
- The transcendent or supernatural in performance
- A comparative analysis of religion, spirituality and theatre as phenomenological and/or epistemological systems
- Religious performances, including as an ecological engagement or as a “theatre” of the oppressed