1 WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?

Introducing this book, this field, and me

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

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

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

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

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

The boxes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Defining performance

You are performing right now. How so? Are you in your dorm or apartment reading this book? Or maybe you're in a crowded coffee shop or a quiet library. If you are online, you are probably multitasking – reading even while you're chatting with friends. You know how to switch between schoolwork and social life. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, think about how you're sitting, or lying down, or whatever. Does it matter (to you or to anyone?) how you look, how you present yourself to the world? Have you combed your hair, are your clothes neat or sloppy, fancy or plain? Consider the various "yous" – different personae – you enact during a single day. The student you, the friend you, the daughter or son you, the playful you, the romantic you, and so on. Right now would you use the same body language if you were enacting another of your personae? Would you be wearing the same clothes? Are you studying alone or in a group? What did you do when you first woke up? Go to the bathroom, brush your teeth, grab a coffee? Say "Hi" to whomever was next to you or in the room across the hall? Did you look in a mirror, make a face, check yourself out? Were you performing for and to yourself?

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

Erving Goffman

Defining performance

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

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

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

Whatever you are doing now, whoever you are at this moment, whatever you did when you began your day, you were and are performing. Later on in this chapter, I will help you distinguish between "is" performing and "as" performing. For now, I want you to think about the assertion that performing is an ongoing, never-ending activity or set of activities. Sometimes one is aware of performing and sometimes one is not aware of it.

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

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

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

- Being
- Doing
- Showing doing
- Explaining showing doing

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

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

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

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

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

Performance can be graphically configured as either a fan or a web. This open fan depicts an orderly panorama ranging from "ritualization" on one end through the "performances

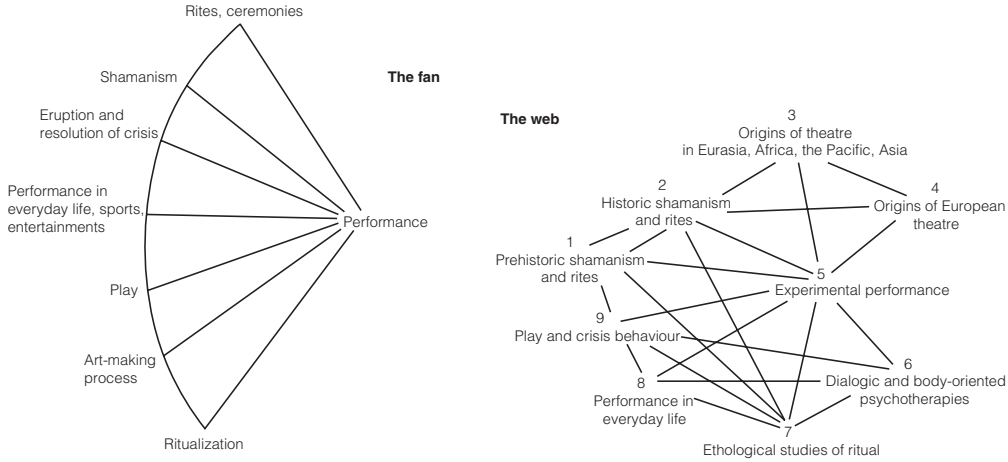

fig 1.2. The fan and the web. Drawing: "Fan" and "Web" from p. ii of *Performance Theory*. 1977 and all subsequent editions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The nine kinds of performances

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

1 In everyday life **(see figure 1.4a)**: daily activities such as cooking, making the bed, walking to work, meeting friends, etc. are improvised performances that follow scripts also known as habits, routines, and conventions.
2 In art **(see figure 1.4b)**: theatre, music, dance, and performance art are obviously performances. But painting, photography, ceramics, and writing can be understood performatively. The spaces where art is performed or exhibited are designed for viewing and/or participating. The arts – as we shall see during the course – provide performance theorists with models and metaphors to understand non-art performances. What the arts do so strikingly is to bring forward performance-as-such: activities that clearly show themselves: showing doing.

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

fig 1.4a. "All Around the Kitchen" by bdunnette. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic via Flickr.

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

3 In sports and other popular entertainments **(see figure 1.4c)**. Sports and other pop entertainments, like the arts, depend on role-playing, costuming, choreography, scenarios or scripts, and carefully arranged spaces. Each sport has its "characters" such as quarterback, outfielder, defender, goalkeeper, etc. Athletes' uniforms are costumes. Training and practice is where athletes acquire performance skills and rehearse specific patterns of playing. Similarly, people are expected to dress and behave in defined ways at pop music concerts, clubs, restored villages, reenactments, and theme parks. At sports and pop entertainments, spectators perform assigned roles such as cheering fans often guided by cheerleaders; club or mosh pit dancers; listeners to tour guides. Stadiums,

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

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

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

4 In medicine **(see figure 1.4d)**, business, law, and other professions, and in ordinary jobs. All of these have defined roles. In law, for example: judge, jury, prosecutor, defense attorney, court reporter, witnesses, defendant, and spectators. The police and the military wear costumes, perform set routines, and enact hierarchically defined roles. In medicine, doctors wear white jackets or scrubs as they perform prescribed procedures ranging from doctor talk to bedside manners. Nurses, clearly identified by their uniforms, assist the doctors and manage the patients. Patients, too, perform both while at a doctor's office and in the hospital. While in the hospital patients don gowns that make their bodies easily available for examination and treatment. Patients, no matter how important in the outside world, generally defer to the medical staff in the hospital. Salesmen have pitches – advertising is all performance. In business, from mailroom clerk to CEO, people at every rank adhere to carefully crafted codes of behavior. Ordinary jobs such as waiting tables, bike messaging, garbage collecting, and many more are performed according to set routines. In fact, each profession and job has its own conventions, dramaturgy, choreography, architecture, and scenography.

5 In politics, candidates and office holders are "handled," following carefully prepared scripts, dressing in clothes selected for them, made up, and microphoned **(see figure 1.4e)**. Politicians often participate in photo-ops where they are photographed with the "right" people. Going off-script is both risky and profitable: the press jumps on flubs but politicians know that acting spontaneously can endear them to the public. The solution? To rehearse spontaneity. A novice politician but experienced pop performer, U.S. President Donald often goes off script, dismaying his handlers and outraging his opponents, but delighting his "base," people who support him no matter what. It is doubtful that Trump rehearses spontaneity while another former media star, President Ronald Reagan, surely did.

6 In technology **(see figure 1.4f)**: social media and mobile communication such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Snapchat, FaceTime, emailing, texting, and cell-phoning involve a complex set of behaviors which allows users to create various "avatars" or roles, making social life more complex by bringing people who are separate in space into close contact virtually. This technology is no longer the province of so-called

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

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

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

"advanced" societies. Even in the poorest nations people use advanced technology.

7 In sex: dating, foreplay, love-making, and aftermath use role playing, fantasy, body ornamentation, the stimulation of all the senses, and a drama-like progression of events. Sex can also be playful, sometimes even a parody of itself. **Figure 1.4g** shows people enjoying a playful "orgy," interacting with each other and with "lover earth," literally.

8 In ritual, such as where a girl at her First Communion accepts the wafer; or where the Maharaja of Banaras, India, worships the boys who are Hindu gods in the Ramlila of Ramnagar, India, cycle play **(see figure 1.4h)**. Religion depends on the performance of rituals such as celebrating the Mass in a Roman Catholic church, prostrating oneself in an Islamic mosque, and reciting the blessing over challah bread and wine to inaugurate the Jewish shabbat (to name a few of a myriad). There are also myriad secular rituals such as rising when a judge enters the courtroom, singing the national anthem, and blowing out the candles on a birthday cake. Or even simpler rituals such as shaking hands, hugging when greeting someone, or waving goodbye when parting. Animals also perform rituals.

9 In play: frolicking, masking, chasing, throwing-and-catching, pretending, teasing, gambling, con-games, and more. There are many varieties of play including but going beyond what children do **(see figure 1.4i)**. Playing can get serious, even dangerous and dark. The whole world can be understood as a great game.

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

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

Restored behavior

Restored behavior is living behavior treated as a film director treats a strip of film. These strips of behavior can be rearranged or reconstructed; they are independent of the causal systems (personal, social, political, technological, etc.) that brought them into existence. They have a life of their own. The original "truth" or "source" of the behavior may not be known, or may be lost, ignored, or contradicted – even while that truth or source is being honored. How the strips of behavior were made, found, or developed may be unknown or concealed; elaborated; distorted by myth and tradition. Restored behavior can be of long duration as in some rituals or of short duration as in fleeting gestures such as waving goodbye. The habits, rituals, and routines of everyday life are restored behaviors. So are the arts, formal rituals and ceremonies, and sports. Restored behaviors are "twice-behaved behaviors," behaviors behaved from the second to the nth time; never for the first time.

Performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body, and tell stories. Restored behavior is the key process of every kind of performing: in everyday life, in healing, in ritual, in play and sports, and in the arts. Restored behavior is "out there," separate from "me." Restored behavior is "me behaving as if I were someone else," or "as I am told to do," or "as I have learned." But even if I feel myself wholly to be myself, acting independently and displaying originality, only a little investigating reveals that the units of behavior that comprise "me" were not invented by "me." Or, quite the opposite, I may experience being "beside myself," "not myself," or "taken over" as in trance. The fact that "me" is multiple is not a sign of derangement but the way things are. The ways one performs one's selves are like how people perform others in dramas, dances, and rituals. If people did not perform multiple selves every day, the art of acting, the experience of trance, and religious worship would not be possible. Most performances, in daily life and otherwise, do not have a single author. Rituals, games, and the performances of everyday life are authored by the collective "tradition," a grand "anonymous." Individuals credited with inventing rituals or games are actually synthesizers, recombiners, compilers, and/or editors of already practiced actions.

In fact, all behavior is restored behavior because all behavior consists of recombining bits of previously behaved behaviors. Mostly people aren't aware that they are doing any such thing. People just "live life." But artistic and ritual performances are consciously marked, framed, or heightened: behaviors carefully shaped, separated from ordinary life. Art and rituals are restored restored behavior, if you will. For my purpose here, it is not necessary to pursue this redoubling. It will make you dizzy.

Restored behavior can evoke non-ordinary reality as in the Balinese trance dance enacting the struggle between the demoness Rangda and the Lion-god Barong **(see figure 1.5)**. Restored behavior can be actions marked off by the aesthetic conventions of theatre, dance, and music. Restored behavior can be actions reified into "etiquette" or diplomatic "protocol." Restored behavior can be a boy not shedding tears when jagged leaves slice the inside of his nostrils during a Papua New Guinea initiation; or the formality of a bride and groom during their wedding ceremony. The myriad known-beforehand actions of life vary enormously from culture to culture and circumstance to circumstance. Because it is marked, framed, and separate, restored behavior can be worked on, recalled, played with, rehearsed, made into something else, transmitted, and transformed.

Restored behavior is the process by which social actions in all their multiple instances are transformed into performances. Restored behavior is symbolic and reflexive **(see Geertz box)**. Its meanings are decoded by those in the know. This is not a question of "high" versus "low" culture. A sports fan knows the rules and strategies of the game, the statistics of key players, the standings, and many other historical and technical details. Ditto for pop music fans. Sometimes the knowledge about a restored behavior is esoteric, privy to only the initiated. For example, among Indigenous Australians, the Outback is full of rocks, trails, water holes, and other markings that record the actions of mythical beings. Only the initiated know the relationship between the ordinary geography and the sacred geography.

fig 1.5. The lion god Barong ready to do battle against the demon Rangda in Balinese ritual dance theatre, 1980s. Photograph by James David Hart, Southern Methodist University.

Clifford Geertz

Human behavior as symbolic action

Once human behavior is seen as . . . symbolic action – action which, like phonation in speech, pigment in painting, line in writing, or sonance in music, signifies – the question as to whether culture is patterned conduct or a frame of mind, or even the two somehow mixed together, loses sense. . . . Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior – or more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation. They find it as well, of course, in various sorts of artifacts, and various states of consciousness; but these draw their meaning from the role they play . . . in an ongoing pattern of life.

1973, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 10, 17

Caution, beware of generalizations

Performances can be generalized and theorized at the level of restored behaviors. But as embodied practices each performance is specific, different from every other. Each performance enacts the conventions and traditions of a culture and its historical circumstances, of a genre, of the personal choices made by performers, directors, and authors, and of the particularities of reception. Take wrestling, for example. In Japan, the moves of a sumo wrestler are determined by long tradition. These moves include the wrestlers' swaggering

figs 1.7a and 1.7b Above: a referee closely watches a professional wrestling match at the European Cruiserweight Champion competition, June 2019. Photograph by Bjoernd/Dreamstime. Right: a face-painted, caped professional wrestler awaits his turn in the ring at the Wrestlemania 31 competition in California, March 2015. Photograph by Eric Broder Van Dyke/Dreamstime.

fig 1.6. Two sumo wrestlers fighting in a traditional ring with kimono-wearing judge standing by and more sumo fighters sitting outside the ring in Tokyo, Japan at Ryogoku. January 17, 2017. Slawek Kozakiewicz/Dreamstime.com.

circling around the ring, adjusting their groin belts, throwing handfuls of salt, eyeballing the opponent, and the final, often very brief, grapple of the two enormous competitors **(see figure 1.6)**. Knowing spectators see in these carefully ritualized displays a centuries-old tradition linked to Shinto, the indigenous Japanese religion. By contrast, American professional wrestling is a noisy sport for "outlaws" where each wrestler flaunts his own raucous and carefully constructed identity **(see figure 1.7)**. During the matches referees are clobbered, wrestlers are thrown from the ring, and cheating is endemic. All this is spurred on by fans who hurl epithets and objects. However, everyone knows that the outcome of

American wrestling is fixed in advance, the lawlessness is play-acting – it's all a show. Fans of sumo and fans of World Wrestling Federation matches know their heroes and villains, can tell you the history of their sport, and react according to accepted conventions and traditions. Both sumo and what occurs under the banner of the WWF are "wrestling"; each enacts the values of its particular culture and genre.

What's true of wrestling is also true of the performing arts, political demonstrations, everyday life roles (doctor, mother, cop, etc.), and all other performances. Each genre is divided into many sub-genres. What is American theatre? Broadway, Downtown Theatre, not-for profit venues, regional theatre, community theatre, community-based theatre, college theatre, and more. Each sub-genre has its own particularities – similar in some ways to related forms but also different. And the whole system could be looked at from other perspectives – in terms, for example, of comedy, tragedy, melodrama, musicals; or divided according to professional or amateur, issue-oriented or apolitical, not-for-profit or commercial, and so on. Categories are not fixed or static. New genres emerge, others fade away. Yesterday's avantgarde is today's mainstream is tomorrow's forgotten practice. Particular instances migrate from one category to another.

Take jazz, for example. During its formative years in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century, jazz was not regarded as an art. It was a "folk performance" or "popular entertainment." But as performers moved out of red-light districts into respectable clubs and finally into concert halls, scholars increasingly paid attention to jazz. A substantial repertory of music was archived. Particular musicians' works achieved canonical status. By the 1950s jazz was regarded as "art." Today's popular music includes rock, rap, and reggae. Pure jazz is no longer pop, it's classical. That is not to say that rock and other forms of pop music will not someday be listened to and regarded in the same way that jazz or European-based classical music is now. The categories of "folk," "pop," and "classical" have more to do with ideology, politics, and economic power than with the formal qualities of the music.

As/is performance

What is the difference between "as" performance and "is" performance? According to performance studies, anything can be studied "as" performance. That means asking performance questions of whatever is being studied. What happens? Where does it happen? How does it look, how does it behave, how does it change over time? What effects does the event or thing have on participants and observers? How is the event staged or displayed? How is it received by critics and scholars? Even if it apparently does nothing, a painting for example, something happens with regard to placement (wall, ceiling, etc.), illumination (or lack thereof), site (museum, gallery, home, outdoors, etc.), interactions with other events and things, and reception. In short, whatever one could ask of a performance one could ask of whatever is being studied "as" a performance. In terms of performance theory, there is no limit to what can be studied "as" performance.

The situation is very different with regard to "is" performance. Something "is" a performance when historical-social context, convention, usage, and tradition say it is. Rituals, play, sports, theatre, dance, and music, and the roles of everyday life are performances because context, convention, usage, and tradition say so. But which rituals? What everyday roles? And so on. One cannot determine what "is" a performance without specifying cultural circumstances. There is nothing inherent in an action that makes it a performance or disqualifies it from being a performance. From the vantage of performance theory, every action is a performance. But from the vantage of cultural practice, some actions will be deemed performances and others not; and this will vary from culture to culture, historical period to historical period **(see McAuley box)**.

Gay McAuley

Problems of a field without limits

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.

2009, "Interdisciplinary Field or Emerging Discipline? Performance Studies at the University of Sydney," 45

Let me draw on the European tradition to show that what "is" or "is not" a performance does not depend on an event in itself but on the specific contexts of that event. Today the enactment of dramas by actors "is" a theatrical performance. But it was not always so. What we today call "theatre" people in other times did not. The ancient Greeks used words similar to ours to describe the theatre (our words derive from theirs), but what the Greeks meant in practice was very different from what we mean. During the epoch of the tragedians **Aeschylus, Sophocles**, and **Euripides**, the enactment of tragic dramas was more a ritual infused with competitions for prizes for the best actor and the best play than it was theatre in the modern sense. The occasions for the playing of the tragedies were religious festivals. Highly sought-after prizes were awarded. These prizes were based on aesthetic excellence demonstrated within the context of but ritual. It was not until **Aristotle**, writing a century after the high point of Greek tragedy as embodied performance, that the aesthetic understanding of theatre was codified. After Aristotle, in Hellenic and Roman times, the entertainment-aesthetic aspect of theatre became more dominant as the ritual-efficacious elements receded.

Skipping forward more than a millennium to medieval Europe, acting written dramas on public stages was "forgotten" or at least not practiced. But there was no scarcity of performances. On the streets, in town squares, in churches, castles, and mansions a wide range of popular entertainments and religious ceremonies held people's attention. There were a multitude of mimes, magicians, animal acts, acrobats, puppet shows, and what would later become the *commedia dell'arte*. The Church offered a rich panoply of feasts, services, and rituals. By the fourteenth century the popular entertainments and religious observances joined to form the basis for the great cycle plays celebrating and enacting the history of the world from Creation through the Crucifixion and Resurrection to the Last Judgment. These we would now call "theatre," but they were not named that at the time. The anti-theatrical prejudice of the Church disallowed any such designation. But then, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the revolution in thought and practice called the Renaissance began. Renaissance means "rebirth" because the humanists of the day thought they were bringing back to life the classical culture of Greece and Rome. When **Andrea Palladio** designed the Teatro Olimpico (Theatre of Olympus, built in 1580–1585) in Vicenza, Italy, he believed he was reinventing a Greek theatre – the first production in the Olimpico was Sophocles' *Oedipus* **(see figure 1.8)**.

Aeschylus (*c.* 525–*c.* 456 BCE): Greek playwright and actor, regarded as the first author of tragedies. Surviving plays include *The Persians* (*c.* 472 BCE) and the trilogy *The Oresteia* (458 BCE).

Sophocles (*c.* 496–*c.* 406 BCE): Greek playwright, credited with introducing the third actor onto the stage of tragedy. Surviving plays include *Oedipus the King* (*c.* 429 BCE), *Electra* (date uncertain), and *Antigone* (*c.* 441 BCE).

Euripides (*c.* 485–*c.* 405 BCE): Greek playwright whose surviving works include *Medea* (431 BCE), *Hippolytus* (428 BCE), *The Trojan Women* (415 BCE), and *The Bacchae* (*c.* 405 BCE).

Aristotle (384–322 BCE): Greek philosopher, student of Plato. Aristotle published numerous philosophical treatises including the *Poetics* (*c.* 335 BCE) where he laid out the principles of Greek tragic drama as he felt they ought to be. Aristotle's ideas have profoundly influenced European and European-derived performance theory.

fig 1.8. The Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, Italy, is an indoor theatre intended to recreate the ancient Greek outdoor theatre. Note the clouds painted on the ceiling. The Teatro Olimpico, however, was more a forerunner of the modern proscenium theatre than a restoration of the ancient classical theatre. Photograph courtesy of Consorzio Turistico Vicenza.

Andrea Palladio (1508–80): Italian architect who worked in Vicenza and Venice designing villas and churches – and the Teatro Olimpico. The Teatro Olimpico, completed after Palladio's death, is the only remaining example of an indoor Renaissance theatre. Palladio wrote *I Quattro Libri dell' Architettura* (1570) and *The Four Books on Architecture* (1997).

Take another leap to the last third of the nineteenth century. The notion of theatre as an art was by then well established. In fact, so well founded that counter-movements called "avantgarde" erupted frequently as radical artists disrupted the status quo. Onward into and throughout the twentieth century each new wave attempted to dislodge what went before. Some of yesterday's avantgarde became today's establishment. The list of avantgarde movements is long: realism, naturalism, symbolism, futurism, surrealism, constructivism, expressionism, Dada, cubism, theatre of the absurd, Happenings, Fluxus, environmental theatre, performance art . . . and more. Sometimes works in these styles were considered theatre, sometimes dance, sometimes music, sometimes visual art, sometimes multimedia, etc. Often enough, events were attacked or dismissed as not being art at all – as were Happenings, an antecedent to the performance art which flourishes in the twenty-first century. The term "performance art" was coined in the 1970s as an umbrella for works that otherwise resisted categorization. Some new art didn't seem to be art at all, but "just living life".

Allan Kaprow, creator of the first Happening, distinguished "artlike art" from "lifelike art" (**see Kaprow box and figure 1.9**. I will discuss Happenings and performance art more thoroughly in Chapter 8.

Allan Kaprow (1927–2006): American artist who coined the term "Happening" to describe his 1959 installation/performance *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Author of *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (1966), *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (2003, with Jeff Kelley), and *Childsplay* (2004, with Jeff Kelley).

Allan Kaprow

Artlike art and lifelike art

Western art actually has two avantgarde histories: one of artlike art, and the other of lifelike art. . . . Simplistically put, artlike art holds that art is separate from life and everything else, while lifelike art holds that art is connected to life and everything else. In other words, there's art at the service of art, and art at the service of life. The maker of artlike art tends to be a specialist; the maker of lifelike art, a generalist.

Avantgarde artlike art occupies the majority of attention from artists and public. It is usually seen as serious and a part of the mainstream Western art-historical tradition, in which mind is separate from body, individual is separate from people, civilization is separate from nature, and each art is separate from the other. . . . Avantgarde artlike art basically believes in (or does not eliminate) the continuity of the traditionally separate genres of visual art, music, dance, literature, theatre, etc.

Avantgarde lifelike art, in contrast, concerns an intermittent minority (Futurists, Dada, guatai, Happeners, fluxartists, Earthworkers, body artists, provos, postal artists, noise musicians, performance poets, shamanistic artists, conceptualists). Avantgarde lifelike art is not nearly as serious as avantgarde artlike art. Often it is quite humorous.

It isn't very interested in the great Western tradition either, since it tends to mix things up: body with mind, individual with people in general, civilization with nature, and so on. Thus it mixes up the traditional art genres, or avoids them entirely – for example, a mechanical fiddle playing around the clock to a cow in the barnyard. Or going to the laundromat.

Despite formalist and idealist interpretations of art, lifelike art makers' principal dialogue is not with art but with everything else, one event suggesting another. If you don't know much about life, you'll miss much of the meaning of the lifelike art that's born of it. Indeed, it's never certain if an artist who creates avantgarde lifelike art is an artist.

1983, "The Real Experiment," 36, 38

"Lifelike" art – to use Kaprow's term – is close to everyday life. Kaprow slightly underlines, highlights, and asks one to be aware of ordinary behavior – to pay close attention to how a meal is prepared, to look back at the footsteps one has made in the desert, to watch ice melting. Paying attention to simple activities performed in the present moment is developing a Zen consciousness in relation to the daily, an

fig 1.9. Allan Kaprow's instructions for his 1967 Happening, *Fluids*. Courtesy the Hopper Estate and the Kaprow Estate.

honoring of the ordinary. Honoring the ordinary transforms the ordinary into something sacred and/or into lifelike art.

In the twenty-first century, many events that formerly were not thought to be art are so designated. Performance theorists offer courses in the aesthetics of everyday life. There is no human activity that is not a performance for someone somewhere. Beyond composed artworks is a blurry world of "accidental" or "incidental" performances. Webcams stream over the internet what people do at home. Television frames the news as entertainment. Public figures need to be media savvy. It's no accident that actor **Ronald Reagan** became president of the USA (1981–1989), as did television reality show star, **Donald Trump** (2017–). Earlier, playwright **Vaclav Havel** was president of Czechoslovakia (1989–1992) and then the Czech Republic (1993–2003), while another playwright and actor, **Karol Jozef Wojtyla**, served as pope John Paul II (1978–2005).

Donald Trump (1946–): 45th president of the United States (2017–). Trump, a New York real-estate developer boasts many properties bearing his name in the USA and globally. Trump worked on television as a co-producer and star of *The Apprentice* and *The Celebrity Apprentice* from 2007 until he announced his candidacy for the presidency in 2015. Trump also appeared in 13 films and numerous television shows from 1989 onward. Trump usually plays himself.

Vaclav Havel (1936–2011): Czech playwright who was the last president of Czechoslovakia (1989–92) and the first of the Czech Republic (1993–2003). A fierce defender of free speech and leader of the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989 overturning Communist rule, Havel's often political plays include *The Memorandum* (1965), *Protest* (1978), and *Redevelopment* (1978).

Ronald Reagan (1911–2004): 40th president of the United States (1981–89) and Governor of California (1967–75), Reagan was a broadcaster, movie actor, union leader, and public speaker before entering electoral politics. Known as the "Great Communicator," Reagan's self-deprecating quips and relaxed manner on camera endeared him to millions despite his conservative and often bellicose policies.

Karol Jozef Wojtyla (1920–2005) who became **Pope John Paul II (1978–2005):** Polish actor and playwright who in 1978 became pope. During World War II, Wojtyla was a member of the Rhapsodic Theatre, an underground resistance group. Ordained as a priest in 1945, Wojtyla continued to write for and about the theatre. His theatrical knowledge served him well as a globe-trotting, media-savvy pontiff. See his *Collected Plays and Writings on Theater* (1987).

The feedback loop can be complicated. The work of a Japanese dancer may affect a German choreographer whose dances in turn are elaborated on by a Mexican performance artist . . . and so on without definite national or cultural limits. Generally, the tendency over the past century has been to dissolve the boundaries separating performing from not-performing, art from not-art. At one end of the spectrum it's clear what a performance is, what an artwork is; at the other end of the spectrum there is no clarity but rather a conflation of categories.

What about actions that are apparently "once-behaved" – the **Happenings** of Kaprow, for example, or an everyday life occurrence (cooking, dressing, taking a walk, talking to a friend)? Even these are constructed from behaviors previously behaved. In fact, the everydayness of everyday life is precisely its familiarity, its being built from known bits of behavior rearranged and shaped in order to suit specific circumstances. The "onceness" of an event is a function of context, reception, and the countless different ways bits of behavior can be arranged, performed, and displayed. The overall event may appear to be new, an original, but its constituent parts – if broken down finely enough are restored behaviors.

Make believe/make belief

Performances can be either "make believe" or "make belief." Make believe performances maintain a clearly marked boundary between the world of the performance and everyday reality. Make belief performances intentionally blur or sabotage that boundary. Works such as Elia Kazan's 1949 production of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Pina Bausch's 1978 dance theatre work, *Café Müller*, or James Taylor's 2015 album *Before This World* are make believe – so are millions of other theatre, dance, and music pieces. In make belief performances, people perform themselves – in specific social roles. This what Goffman writes about in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. A medical doctor performs her make belief role in Goffman's sense; as does a lawyer arguing a case. A salesperson pitching a car operates in the shady region between make believe and make belief. A few theatrical roles are both make believe and make belief. For example, the roles of the Hindu god Rama, his wife Sita, and Rama's brothers performed by pre-adolescent boys in the Ramlila of Ramnagar are believed-in as gods and worshipped as such. I will look at Ramlila more closely in Chapter 6.

Not infrequently, a make believe role is based on a make belief role. For example, the 1960 movie *Inherit the Wind* is based on the actual 1925 trial of John Thomas Scopes who was accused and convicted of teaching **Charles Darwin**'s theory of evolution to a Tennessee high school class. This famous "monkey trial" was intentionally staged to test whether or not "modern science" ought to be taught in public schools. Almost a century later, the controversy still smolders – but in reverse: ought "creationism" be taught in public schools? In *Inherit the Wind*, Spencer Tracy plays the lawyer Henry Drummond, a thinly veiled version of Scopes's famous defense lawyer, Clarence Darrow. Fredric March plays Matthew Harrison Brady, a film version of three-time presidential candidate, and believer in The Bible as literal truth, William Jennings Bryan. In this example, the make belief of the 1925 trial is the basis for the make believe of the 1960 film.

Charles Darwin (1809–82): English naturalist who developed the theory of evolution by natural selection. In addition to his landmark *The Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin also wrote the increasingly influential *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872).

Public figures often make belief – enacting the effects they want the receivers of their performances to accept for real. When an American president addresses a joint session of Congress or makes a grave announcement of national importance, his appearance is carefully staged so that he can publicly perform his authority. Speaking to Congress, the president has behind him the vice president and the speaker of the house, while a large American flag provides an appropriately patriotic background **(see figure 1.10)**. At other times, the national leader may wish to appear as a friend or a good neighbor talking informally with "fellow citizens" (**figure 1.11**).

fig 1.10. President Donald J. Trump delivering his 2017 State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. Standing behind the president are Vice President Michael R. Pence (left) and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (right). Note the American flag as a backdrop. Official White House Photograph by Shealah Craighead.

fig 1.11. Liberian Nobel Peace Prize winners President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (left) and peace activist Leymah Gbowee (center) meet in Monrovia on October 9, 2011, with some of the women Gbowee inspired to pray and protest for peace during Liberia's civil war. Photograph by Rebecca Blackwell/AP/Shutterstock.

Everyone knows these kinds of activities are meticulously staged. Today's American presidency – at least its public face – is a totally scripted performance that has only been played (as of the 2016 election) by a man. The president's words are written by professional speech-writers, the backdrops and settings carefully designed for maximum effect, the chief executive himself well rehearsed. Teleprompters ensure that the president will appear to be speaking off the cuff while he is actually reading every word. Each detail is choreographed, from how the president makes eye contact (with the camera, with the selected audience at a town meeting), to how he uses his hands, dresses, and is made up. The goal of all this is to "make belief" – first, to build the public's confidence in the president, and second, to sustain the president's belief in himself. His performances convince himself even as he strives to convince others. One of the paradoxically disconcerting and breath-taking aspects of Trump's performances is that he often goes off script to the delight of his "core" and horror of his opponents.

Arguably, the president is an important personage by virtue of his position of authority. But with the exponential growth of media, hordes of citizens have jumped into the make-belief business. Some are hucksters selling everything from cooking utensils and firm mattresses to everlasting salvation. Others are network "anchors," familiar voices and faces holding the public in place amidst the swift currents of the news. Still others are "pundits," experts – economists, lawyers, retired generals, etc. – whose authority is reaffirmed if not created by their frequent appearances. Then come the "spin doctors," employed by politicians and corporations to turn bad news into good. As for the producers behind the scenes, their job is to make certain that whatever is going on is dramatic enough to attract viewers. The greater the number watching, the higher the revenues from sponsors. Some news is inherently exciting – disasters, wars, crimes, and trials. But media masters have learned how to dramatize the stock market and the weather. How to build the "human interest" angle into every story. The producers know that the same information is available from many different sources, so their job is to develop attractive sideshows. Fake news and real stuff are offered simultaneously on different channels and platforms. Paradoxically, the result is a public less easy to fool. With so many kinds of performances on view, many people have become increasingly sophisticated and suspicious deconstructors of the performative techniques deployed to lure them.

Blurry boundaries

The notion of fixity has been under attack at least since 1927, when **Werner Heisenberg** proposed his **"uncertainty principle"** and its concomitant **Heisenberg Effect**. Few outside of a select group of quantum physicists really understood Heisenberg's theory. But "uncertainty" or "indeterminacy" rang a bell. It has proven to be a very appropriate, durable, and powerful metaphor affecting thought in many disciplines including the arts. Music theorist and composer **John Cage** often used indeterminacy as the basis for his music, influencing a generation of artists and performance theorists.

Werner Heisenberg (1901–76): German physicist, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1932 for his formulation of quantum mechanics which is closely related to his uncertainty principle.

uncertainty principle and **Heisenberg effect:** The uncertainty principle is a tenet of quantum mechanics proposed by Werner Heisenberg in 1927, which states that the measurement of a particle's position produces uncertainty in the measurement of the particle's momentum, or vice versa. While each quantity may be measured accurately on its own, both cannot be accurately measured at the same time. The uncertainty principle is closely related to the Heisenberg effect, which asserts that the measurement of an event changes the event.

John Cage (1912–92): American composer and music theorist whose interests spanned using indeterminacy to make art, Zen Buddhism, and mushrooms. Author of *Silence: Selected Lectures and Writings* (1961) and *A Year from Monday* (1967). His many musical compositions include *Fontana Mix* (1960) and *Roaratorio* (1982).

Boundaries are blurry in different ways. On the internet, people participate effortlessly in a system that transgresses national boundaries. Even languages present less of a barrier than before. Already you can log in, write in your own language, and know that your message will be translated into the language of whomever you are addressing. At present, this facility is available in only a limited number of languages. But the repertory of translatables will increase. It will be routine for Chinese-speakers to address Kikuyu-speakers or for someone in a remote village to address a message to any number of people globally. Furthermore, for better or worse, English has become a global rather than national language. At the United Nations, 193 nations representing more than 99% of the world's populations speaking about 6,500 languages communicate with each other in six official UN languages: *Arabic*, *Chinese*, *English*, *French*, *Russian*, and *Spanish*.

The dissolution of national boundaries is occurring in relation to manufactured objects as well as with regard to politics and information. If, for example, you drive an American or Japanese or Swedish or German or Korean car, you may believe it came from the country whose label it displays. But where were the parts manufactured? Where was the car assembled, where designed? The brand name refers to itself, not to a place of origin. Japanese cars are made in Tennessee and Fords roll off assembly lines in Canada, Europe, and elsewhere. Mexico is a major assembly point for many cars. And what about your clothes? Look at the labels of the clothes you are wearing right now. Do your dress, pants, shoes, and blouse come from the same country? Do you even know where they were stitched or by whom and at what wage or under what working conditions?

But more than cars and clothes are transnational. Cultures are also blurring. Globalization – even though it is bitterly resisted by nationalists and some leftists – is accelerating. Migrations both forced and voluntary move millions of people. Airports are the same wherever you travel; standardized fast food is available in every major city in the world. American, Chinese, Indian, and European television and movies are viewed globally; the formats of these media increasingly converge even if the content is distinct. The profusion of international arts festivals and the hosts of artists touring all parts of the world are a major means of circulating styles of performing. "World beat" music combines elements of African, Asian, Latin American, and Euro-American sounds. New hybrids are emerging all the time. The USA, the UK, and other nations, are increasingly intercultural in population diversity, languages, and living styles. People argue whether or not all this mixing is good or bad. To what degree is globalization the equivalent of Americanization? Intercultural, transcultural, and global performance is the subject of Chapter 10.

The seven functions of performance

I have touched on what performance is and what can be studied as performance. But what do performances accomplish? It is difficult to stipulate the functions of performance. Over time, and in different cultures, there have been a number of proposals. One of the most inclusive is that of the Indian theatre sage **Bharata**, who in his *Natyashastra* declared that performance was a comprehensive repository of knowledge and a very powerful vehicle for the expression of emotions **(see Bharata box)**. The Roman poet-scholar **Horace** in his *Ars Poetica* argued that theatre ought to entertain and educate, an idea taken up by many Renaissance thinkers and later by the German playwright and director **Bertolt Brecht**.

Bharata (*c.* second century BCE–*c.* second century CE): The putative author of *The Natyashastra*, the earliest and still very influential South Asian theoretical and practical treatise on all aspects of traditional Indian theatre: origins, architecture, acting, dancing, playwriting, and music-making. Bharata's theory of "rasa," the flavor of feelings, and how they are shared in the performing arts by performers and partakers (spectators, audiences) is very influential in India and beyond.

Horace (65–8 BCE): Roman poet whose *Ars Poetica* (The Art of Poetry, 1974) offers advice on the construction of dramas. His basic axiom that art should both "entertain and educate" is very close to what Brecht theorized and practiced

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956): German playwright, director, performance theorist, and Marxist. In 1949 he and his wife, actress Helene Weigel (1900–71), founded the Berliner Ensemble. Brecht's major works include *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (1930), *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941), Galileo (1943), *The Good Woman of Szechwan* (1943), and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948). The dates refer to stage premieres. Many of his theoretical writings are anthologized in English in *Brecht on Theatre* (1964).

Bharata

The functions of Natya (Theatre–Dance–Music)

I [the god Brahma] have created the Natyaveda to show good and bad actions and feelings of both the gods and yourselves. It is a representation of the entire three worlds and not only of the gods or of yourselves. Now dharma [duty], now artha [strategies], now kama [love], now humor, now fights, now greed, now killing. Natya teaches right to people going wrong; it gives enjoyment for those who are pleasure seekers; it chastises those who are ill-behaved and promotes tolerance in the well-behaved. It gives courage to cowards, energy to the brave. It enlightens people of little intellect and gives wisdom to the wise. Natya provides entertainment to kings, fortitude to those grief stricken, money to those who want to make a living, and stability to disturbed minds. Natya is a representation of the ways of the world involving various emotions and differing circumstances. It relates the actions of good, bad, and middling people, giving peace, entertainment, and happiness, as well as beneficial advice, to all. It brings rest and peace to persons afflicted by sorrow, fatigue, grief, or helplessness. There is no art, no knowledge, no learning, no action that is not found in natya.

1996 [second century BCE–second century CE], *The Natyasastra*, chapter 1

Putting together ideas drawn from various sources, I find seven functions of performance:

1 to entertain
2 to create beauty
3 to mark or change identity
4 to make or foster community
5 to heal
6 to teach or persuade
7 to deal with the sacred and the demonic

These are not listed in order of importance. The hierarchy changes according to who you are and what you want to get done. Few if any performances accomplish all these functions, but many performances emphasize more than one.

For example, a street demonstration or propaganda play may be mostly about teaching, persuading, and convincing – but such a show also entertains and may foster community and create beauty. Shamans heal as well as entertain, foster community, create beauty, and deal with the sacred and/or demonic. A doctor's "bedside manner" is a performance of healing, encouragement, and sometimes teaching. A Christian church service led by a charismatic preacher enhances community solidarity, invokes both the sacred and the demonic, teaches, entertains, and sometimes heals. If someone at the service declares for Jesus and is reborn, that person's identity is marked and changed. A state leader addressing the nation wants to persuade and foster community – but she had better entertain also if she wants people to listen. Rituals tend to have the greatest number of functions, commercial productions the fewest. A Broadway musical will entertain and create beauty, but little else. The seven functions of performance are effectively represented as overlapping and interacting spheres, a network **(see figure 1.12)**.

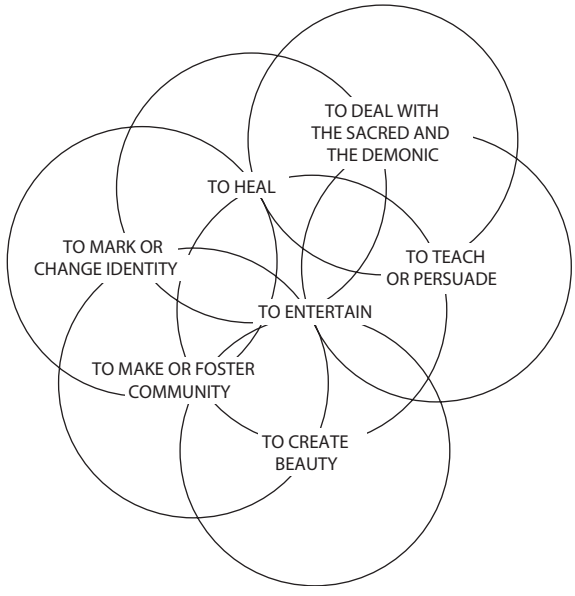

fig 1.12. The seven interlocking spheres of performance. Drawing by Richard Schechner.

Whole works, even genres, can be shaped to very specific functions. Examples of political or propaganda performances are found all over the world. El Teatro Campesino of California, was founded in 1965 by **Luis Valdez** to support Mexican migrant farmworkers in the midst of a bitter strike, built solidarity among the strikers, educated them to the issues involved, attacked the bosses, and entertained. ETC is still going strong. Groups such as Greenpeace and ACTUP use performance militantly in support of a healthy ecology and to raise money for AIDS research and treatment. "Theatre for development" as practiced widely since the 1960s in Africa, Latin America, and Asia educates people in a wide range of subjects and activities, from birth control and cholera prevention to irrigation and the protection of endangered species. **Augusto Boal**'s Theatre of the Oppressed empowers "spectactors" to enact, analyze, and change their situations (see Chapters 4, 6, and 10).

fig 1.13. *The Measures Taken*, by Bertolt Brecht and Hans Eisler, a Lehrstück or "teaching play" – a play with a clear message. At the Berlin Philharmonie, 1930. Copyright Akademie der Künste [AdK] Berlin, Brecht-Archiv [BBA], Fotoarchiv 44/01.25, photographer unknown.

www

Luis Valdez (1940–): Founder in 1965 of El Teatro Campesino (ETC), Valdez is a playwright, actor, writer, and theatre and film director. At its inception, ETC worked with the United Farmworkers Union in support of a strike by Mexican migrant farm workers in California. ECT's "actos" were short comic plays designed to educate and galvanize the workers. Today, ETC continues its mission of creating "a popular art with twenty-first century tools that presents a more just and accurate account of human history" (http://elteatrocampesino.com/about-us/Mission Statement). Valdez's best known works are his play *Zoot Suit* (1979) and film *La Bamba* (1987). In 2016, he received the United States Presidential Medal of Art.

Augusto Boal (1931–2009): Brazilian director and theorist, founder of Theatre of the Oppressed which he developed from the 1960s onward. His books include *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1985), *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1980, Eng. 1992), *Legislative Theatre* (1998), and his autobiography, *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* (2001).

Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed is based to some degree on Brecht's work, especially his *Lehrstücke* or "learning plays" of the 1930s such as *The Measures Taken* or *The Exception and the Rule* **(see figure 1.13)**. During China's Cultural Revolution (1966–75), which she helped orchestrate, **Jiang Qing** produced a series of "model operas" carefully shaped to teach, entertain, and put forward a new kind of community based on the values of Chinese Communism as Jiang and her husband **Mao Zedong** interpreted them. These theatre and ballet pieces employed both traditional Chinese performance styles modified to suit the ideological purposes of the Cultural Revolution and elements of Western music and staging **(see figure 1.14)**. The utopian vision of the model operas contradicted the terrible fact of the millions who were killed, tortured, and displaced by the Cultural Revolution. But by the turn of the twenty-first century, the model operas were again being performed, studied, and enjoyed for their entertainment value, technical excellence, and artistic innovations **(see Melvin and Cai box)**.

Jiang Qing (1914–91): Chinese Communist leader, wife of Chairman Mao Zedong. As Deputy Director of China's Cultural Revolution (1966–76), Jiang Qing sought to redefine all forms of artistic expression in strict adherence to revolutionary ideals. She oversaw the development of "model operas" and "model ballets," versions of Chinese traditional performance genres that made heroes of workers, peasants, and soldiers instead of aristocrats. After the Cultural Revolution, she was tried as one of "The Gang of Four" and sentenced to death, later reprieved to life imprisonment. Suffering from throat cancer, she was released from prison in 1991 and committed suicide in the hospital shortly thereafter.

Mao Zedong (1893–1976): Chairman Mao was a founder of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921; he became its leader in 1935. During the 1930s and 1940s Mao's forces waged guerrilla warfare first against the Japanese who invaded China in 1937 and then against Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), Mao's rival in the civil war. In 1949, after defeating Chiang (who retreated to Taiwan), Mao and his comrades established the People's Republic of China (PRC). Mao led the PRC until his death. In 1966, Mao instigated the Cultural Revolution which unleashed both terror and reform until it ended shortly after Mao's death. In addition to being a military and political leader, Mao was a calligrapher, poet, and performance theorist. *Mao Tse-Tung on Literature and Art* (1967), includes Mao's important "Talks at the Yenan [Yan'an] Forum [1942] on Literature and Art."

fig 1.14. *The Red Lantern*, one of five "model operas" performed in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). David King Collection. Copyright Tate, London 2019.

Entertainment means something produced in order to please a public. But what may please one public may not please another. So one cannot specify exactly what constitutes entertainment – except that almost all performances strive to some degree or other to entertain. I include in this regard both fine and popular arts, as well as rituals and the performances of everyday life. What about performances of avantgarde artists and political activists designed to offend? Guerrilla theatre events disrupt and may even destroy. These are not entertaining. However, "offensive" art usually is aimed at two publics simultaneously: those who do not find the work pleasant, and those who are entertained by the discomfort the work evokes in others.

Beauty is hard to define. Beauty is not equivalent to being "pretty." The ghastly, terrifying events of kabuki, Greek tragedy, Elizabethan theatre, and some performance art are not pretty. Nor are the demons invoked by shamans. But the skilled enactment of horrors can be beautiful and yield aesthetic pleasure. Is this true of such absolute horrors as slavery, the Shoah, or the extermination of Native Americans? Francisco de Goya y Luciente's The Disasters of War show that nothing is beyond the purview of artistic treatment **(see figure 1.15)**. Philosopher **Susanne K. Langer**

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Sheila **Melvin** and
Cai Jindong

The model operas

"The Communist Party of China is like the bright sun," sang Granny Sha, her face glowing through wrinkles of sorrow as she told of abuse at the hands of a "poisonous snake, bloodsucker" landlord in Kuomintang-ruled China. Her words, soaring and elongated in the lyrical gymnastics of Beijing Opera, were punctuated by a roar of applause from the audience in the Yifu theatre here [Shanghai]. . . . While the scene on stage closely resembled Cultural Revolution–era performance, the audience members – mostly middle-aged and stylishly dressed, casually taking cell phone calls, slurping Cokes and licking ice cream bars as the opera proceeded – were decidedly Shanghai 2000. . . . As the number of performances increases, so do attempts to analyze the artistic value of this genre created expressly to serve politics.

Most intellectuals, even those who detest the genre, are willing to concede that if people want to watch model operas, they should have that right. "I don't want to watch them," said Mr. Luo Zhengrong, the composer. "I don't want to hear them. But they were created well, and if they didn't have a political purpose, they wouldn't exist. The fact is there's a market for them. If there wasn't a market, they wouldn't be performed."

2000, "Why this Nostalgia for Fruits of Chaos?" 1, 31

fig 1.15. From Goya's *Disasters of War,* 1810–14. Photo courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Mrs Grafton H. Pyne, 1951.

argued that in life people may endure terrible experiences, but in art these experiences are transformed into "expressive form" **(see Langer box)**. Langer's classical notions of aesthetics are challenged today, an epoch of simulation, digitization, performance artists, and webcam performers who do the thing itself in front of our eyes.

Susanne K. Langer (1895–1985): American philosopher and aesthetician. Her major works include *Philosophy in a New Key* (1942), *Feeling and Form* (1953), and *Problems of Art* (1957).

Susanne K. Langer

Every good art work is beautiful

A work of art is intrinsically expressive; it is designed to abstract and preset forms for perception – forms of life and feeling, activity, suffering, selfhood – whereby we conceive these realities, which otherwise we can but blindly undergo. Every good work of art is beautiful; as soon as we find it so, we have grasped its expressiveness, and until we do we have not seen it as good art, though we may have ample intellectual reason to believe that it is so. Beautiful works may contain elements that, taken in isolation, are hideous. . . . The emergent form, the whole, is alive and therefore beautiful, as awful things may be – as gargoyles, and fearful African masks, and the Greek tragedies of incest and murder are beautiful. Beauty is not identical with the normal, and certainly not with charm and sense appeal, though all such properties may go to the making of it. Beauty is expressive form.

1953, *Feeling and Form,* 395–96

As/is and the broad spectrum, again

Let us return to two things discussed earlier in this chapter, "as" and "is" performance and the "broad spectrum of performance." Any event, action, or behavior may be examined "as" performance. Using "as" performance is to ask questions like: How is an event deployed in space and disclosed in time? What clothes or objects are put to use? What roles do people play and how do these change over time? How are the actions created, controlled, distributed, received, and evaluated? "Is" performance refers to more definite, bounded events marked by context, convention, usage, and tradition.

In today's highly performatized world, distinguishing between "as" performance and "is" performance is not as easy to do as it used to be. Boundaries are dissolving. The internet, globalization, and the ever-increasing presence of media saturates life at all levels. Data theft and identity theft go hand in hand; fake news and verifiable facts converge. More and more people experience their lives as a connected series of overlapping performances: dressing for a party, interviewing for a job, experimenting with sexual orientations and gender roles, playing a life role such as mother or son, or a professional role such as doctor or teacher, creating avatars on social media. The sense that "performance is everywhere" is heightened by a mediatized environment where people text, phone, fax, and email, spending hours each day on social media. An unlimited quantity of information and entertainment – the conjoined twins named infotainment – comes through the air.

One way to comprehend this complex situation is to organize performance genres, behaviors, and activities into a continuum **(see figure 1.16a)**.

These genres, behaviors, and activities are the "broad spectrum" of performance I mentioned earlier. As in the spectrum of visible light, they blend into one another; their boundaries are indistinct; they interact. The continuum can also be represented with "play" and "ritual" not at opposite ends of the spectrum, but underlying and permeating the other kinds of performances **(see figure 1.16b)**.

More on figure 1.16. Games, sports, pop entertainments, and the performing arts include many genres each with their own conventions, rules, histories, and traditions. An enormous range of activities comes under these banners. Even the same activity – cricket, for example – varies

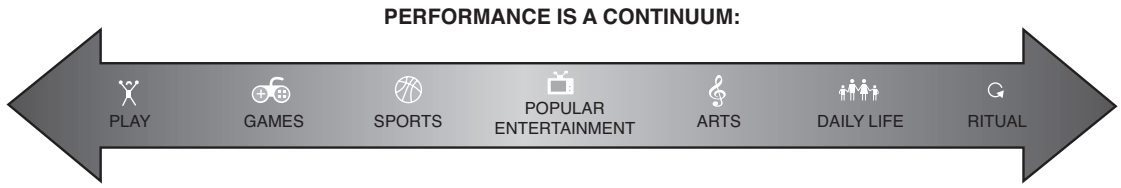


fig 1.16a. The broad spectrum of performance as a continuum with "ritual" and "play" at opposite ends.

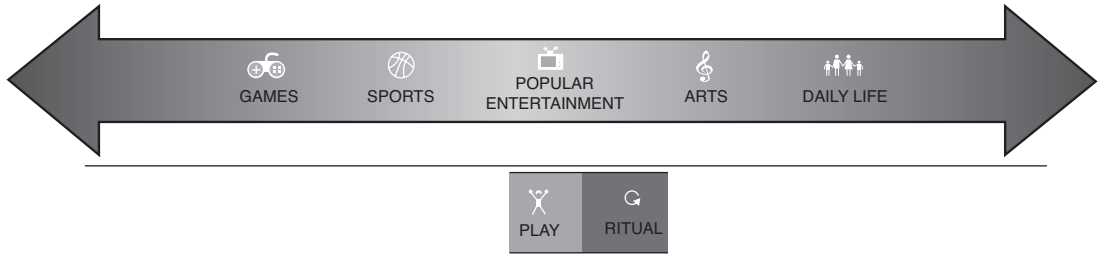


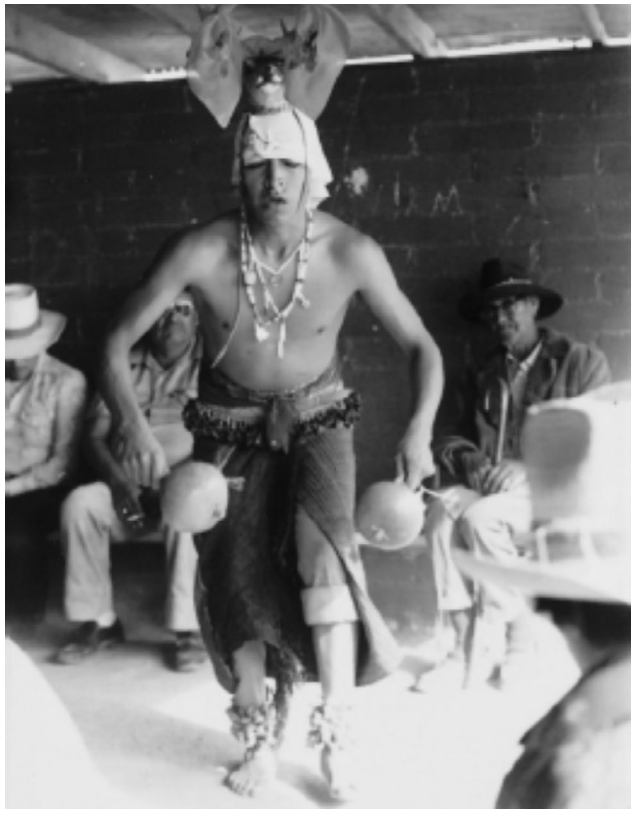
fig 1.16b. The broad spectrum of performance as a continuum with "play" and "ritual" underlying and permeating the other kinds of performances.

widely. Cricket at a test match is not the same as cricket played on a neighborhood oval. And cricket in the Trobriand Islands, where it was changed into a ritual encounter between towns featuring dancing more than hitting and fielding, and with the home team always winning, is something else again. Jerry W. Leach and Gary Kildea's *Trobriand Cricket* (1973) was staged for the cameras, adding another layer of performative complexity. But despite all complicating factors, generalizations can be made. Even though genres are distinct, and no one confuses the Superbowl with *Les Sylphides*, both ballet and football are about movement, contact, lifting, carrying, falling, and rushing to and fro. In many cultures, theatre, dance, and music are so wholly integrated that it is not possible to designate a given event as one or the other. Kathakali in India, a Makishi performance in Zambia, and the Deer Dance of Yaqui Native Americans are but three examples among many that integrate music, dance, and theatre **(see figure 1.17)**.

The behaviors of daily life are relatively fluid compared to the strict governance controlling certain games, sports, rituals, and arts. But even the most casual social interaction is rule-guided and culture-specific. Manners, body language, and the like are enacted according to known scenarios. The rules differ from society to society, circumstance to circumstance. But there is no human social interaction that is not "lawful," that is not rule-bound.

fig 1.17. These performances integrate dance, theatre, and music.

A kathakali dance-theatre heroic character gesturing during a performance in a temple, Cochin, India, 2016. Photograph by Dmytro Gililtukha/123RF.



Yaqui Deer Dancer, New Pascua, Arizona, 1980s. Photograph by Richard Schechner.

Makishi mask performer, Zambia. Photograph courtesy of Richard Schechner.

Conclusions

"Performance" and "to perform" – the noun and the verb, the thing and the action – comprise a very large array of meanings. Advertisements for cars, erectile dysfunction remedies, and cat litter all proclaim how well various products perform. Athletes, novelists, cooks, and computer programs are praised for their performances. But on the other side of the ledger, when you accuse someone of performing, you are calling the person's sincerity, even honesty, into question. Performance smells of the fake, the put-on, the con. Investigating how the same word and the concepts it indicates can mean so many different, opposing things is a fundamental subject of this book.

The rest of the book delves deeper into what I've introduced in this opening chapter. Chapter 2 is about performance studies as an academic discipline. Chapter 3 examines performance processes – how performances are generated, presented, evaluated, and remembered. Chapter 4 ranges across the broad spectrum of performing from not acting to acting, trance dancing to surgery, trials and executions to surgery. Chapter 5 delves into ritual, Chapter 6 into play. Chapter 7 explores the earliest known human performances, those of the paleolithic epoch 10–40,000 or more years ago. Chapter 8 considers performativity, rooted in speech act theory but branching out into all aspects of human life. Chapter 9 focuses on social media. Chapter 10 concludes the book with an investigation of intercultural, transcultural, and global performances. It is neither advisable nor possible to fence these topics off from each other – so although each chapter develops several basic themes, there is plenty of overlap and interplay among the chapters.

TALK ABOUT

1 Pick an action not usually thought to be a performance. For example, waiting on line at a supermarket checkout counter, crossing the street, visiting a sick friend. In what ways can each of these be analyzed "as" a performance?
2 Select a sports match, a religious ritual, an everyday life occurrence, and a theatre, dance, or music event. Discuss their functions – what do each of these accomplish? What are the similarities and differences among these functions? Take into account venue, architecture and design, audience involvement, event structure, and historical-cultural context.

PERFORM

1 Observe an everyday encounter of people you do not know. Intervene in the encounter yourself with a definite goal in mind. Afterwards, discuss how your intervention changed the performances of the others. Did they welcome or resent your intervention? Why? Did you think you were performing? Why?

2 In small groups, take turns reproducing for your group a bit of behavior that you ordinarily do only in private. How did the behavior change when you were self-consciously performing for others?