

Call for Papers: Performing Carnival! IFTR 2025, Cologne; Jun 9-13 2025

Carnival, respectively the carnivalesque, is a phenomenon that can be found in almost every culture around the globe and in almost all periods in history. But it is one of those mercurial phenomena which, rather than being frozen in time like a petrified tradition, is constantly changing, adapting and reinventing itself. Carnival is therefore both deeply rooted in history and always new. It can be highly political and revolutionary at times, self-assuring at others, or merely hedonistic escapism.

Ekstasis | Subversion | Metamorphosis. These are three keywords that we have chosen to offer a mapping of the colorful, chaotic and diverse world of **Performing Carnival** that we want to explore at the IFTR 2025 conference in Cologne. The Greek word **Ekstasis**, meaning displacement, wonder and the feeling of being out of place in an “exalted state of feeling” (OED) is the hallmark of carnivalesque festivities in many cultures around the world: Dancing and singing in the streets, indulging in and overindulging in drink and food, celebrating foolishness – these are all key elements of these excessive performances. **Subversion** draws attention to the act of parody, satire and mockery – the symbolic overturning of the usual order that accompanies these activities. **Metamorphosis** implies not only the external aspect of costume and masquerade but also the promise/thread of a truly transgressive or transformative experience of becoming someone/something else...

IFTR 2025 invites reflections on performances of the carnivalesque in all forms, facets, and aspects, historical and cultural contexts. In examining the social and political dimensions of carnival, various questions arise: Does its promise of overturning the order entail political change? Or is it just a safety valve serving those in power? Order and disorder, power and anarchy seem to be linked in a dialectical way that becomes visible and tangible in the liminal sphere of carnival.

While the cultural, historical, and social specificities of the carnivalesque may vary, they all share a common thread: an explicitly physical experience. This links carnival to performance. Unlike other forms of cultural expression, the carnivalesque demands the performing body to become experienceable. Though also making use of language and discourse, the carnivalesque usually privileges the sensual, physical experience.

Nevertheless, the notion of the carnivalesque Other-World (*Anderwelt*) should not be romanticized. It is not an idyllic, peaceful realm. The carnivalesque encompasses both the excess of violence, horror and the uncanny, as well as the elements of merriment and entertainment. It is, in fact, a genuinely liminal sphere, open to all possibilities and perspectives.

IFTR 2025, situated in the city of Cologne, which itself has a longstanding tradition of carnival, offers an opportunity to revisit the concept of carnival in the twenty-first century. In an age characterized by the ascendance of political actors who employ masquerade and exaggeration as a means of exerting influence, and in which the ubiquitous stream of images, stories and sounds creates a multiplicity of competing world views, which frequently obscure real conflicts and power games, reflections on carnival and the carnivalesque have acquired a contemporary urgency.

Possible themes (the list is not meant to be definitive but rather invites extension in all forms):

- Carnival and Power
- Carnival and Violence
- Carnival and Gender
- Carnival and Transformation
- Carnival and Transgression
- Queering Carnival
- Carnival and Public Spheres of Performance
- Sites of Carnival
- (Un)Masking
- Carnival and Cultural Appropriation
- Carnival and Global (Dis-)Connections
- Carnival and Religion
- Carnival and Ritual
- Ecologies of Carnival
- Economies of Carnival
- Carnival and Cultural Imaginaries
- Carnival and Material Cultures
- Carnival and (Screen) Media

Abstracts of between 200 and 250 words are invited for this conference from scholars, teachers, researchers, artists, and students of theatre arts, theatre studies, performance studies, and other related disciplines.

All abstracts should be submitted to [Cambridge Core](#). Please do not send abstracts to the organizers. Please note that you have to be a member of the IFTR to submit an abstract. To join the IFTR or renew your membership, visit the [Cambridge Core Membership page](#).

Deadline for the Submission of Abstracts: **15 January 2025**.

Please do not send abstracts to the organizers.

NB: Each Working Group issues its own CfP which may or may not address the main conference theme. These will be available on the Working Groups' webpages by **1 November 2024**.

For further information: www.IFTR2025.com

Contact us on: iftr-orga@uni-koeln.de

Conference Dates: 9 – 13 June 2025

Conference Venue: University of Cologne, Germany

Co-Conveners:

Prof. Dr. Peter W. Marx
Dr. Mathilde Frank
Anna-Lu Rausch