

# AusStage and the Aus-e-Stage Project: Collaborative eResearch in the Performing Arts

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## INTRODUCTION

This session brings together researchers leading innovations in performing arts eResearch through the AusStage network. Researchers will demonstrate new research applications for the AusStage database and raise questions about the implications of visual interface design and collective approaches to data curation for research in the performing arts and beyond.

## AUSSTAGE AND THE AUS-E-STAGE PROJECT

AusStage is the Australian hub for research on live performance. The AusStage project links researchers in universities, industry and government; at its core is the AusStage database of the Australian performing arts, which is freely accessible at <http://www.ausstage.edu.au>. The database stimulates collaboration and data sharing, drives the take-up of innovative methodologies, and integrates access to Australian performing arts collections. AusStage meets the national need for public access to reliable information on live performance in Australia. AusStage's methodological innovations are attracting interest from researchers internationally.

The Aus-e-Stage project, developed through the National eResearch Architecture Taskforce, builds on the success of the AusStage partnership in addressing the methodological challenges of incorporating quantitative approaches within arts and humanities research. It is providing performing arts researchers with platform-independent, visually-interactive access to quantifiable research data through (a) a map-based interface with which to geographically search and display AusStage data; (b) a visual interface for navigating and analysing networks of artistic collaboration in the AusStage dataset; and (c) a new mobile interface to solicit input from spectators and generate a new dataset of immediate, on-location, experience-near responses to Australian performing arts.

## SESSION STRUCTURE

Joanne Tompkins provides an overview of AusStage network and the research implications of new developments for the AusStage database.

Jonathan Bollen discusses the development of a new mobile interface to solicit input from spectators and generate a new dataset of immediate, on-location, experience-near responses to Australian performing arts. An automated content analysis system will aggregate the emotional, aesthetic and critical content in spectator responses, visualise aggregated response data, and simultaneously deliver these displays back to users to inform spectator choice, as well as providing a repository of audience response on performance to researchers, something that is currently unavailable.

Jane Mullett reports on collaborative eResearch with David Carlin into interactive online video archiving for performing arts companies. Circus, and in particular Circus Oz, encourages a sense of shared community with its audience. This project investigates i) how this space can be augmented through expansion into the digital networked environment, and ii) how the company's video archives can be utilised within a digital medium.

Gillian Arrighi provides a regional perspective on collaborative data curation from Newcastle where researchers have been contributing to AusStage since 2003. Contemporary and historical data on amateur, mainstream, site-specific and popular entertainments, occurring in a diverse range of traditional and non-traditional performance venues, is generating a broad study of the social and cultural life of the region. Arrighi will discuss the next phase of the project in which new research applications, including geographic mapping and visual exploration, will be introduced to the regional data set.

Shona Erskine reports on user-experience research with dance artists in Western Australia and initiatives to improve the AusStage interface. New developments aim to improve the recording and display of information about artists and their works by using network visualization in analyzing and displaying patterns of artistic collaborations and by encouraging artists and organisations to participate in data curation.

The session will conclude with guided discussion about the implications of these developments and applications for research in the performing arts and beyond.

## BIOGRAPHIES

Gillian Arrighi is a lecturer in Drama in the School of Drama, Fine Art and Music at the University of Newcastle and has been involved with the AusStage project since 2003. She has recently published on amusement parks as sites of performance in Veronica Kelly and Robert Dixon, eds., *Impact of the Modern: everyday modernities in Australia 1890-1960* (Sydney: SUP, 2008); on animals in performance in *Theatre Journal* (Dec 2008); and on circus entertainments during the depression of the 1890s in *Australasian Drama Studies* (Apr 2009).

Jonathan Bollen is lecturer in Drama in the School of Humanities at Flinders University in Adelaide. He plays a leading role in coordinating research for the AusStage database. He is co-author of *Men at Play: Masculinities in Australian Theatre since the 1950s* (with Adrian Kiernander and Bruce Parr, Rodopi 2008). His research on gender, sexuality and performance has been published in *The Drama Review*, *Social Semiotics* and *Australasian Drama Studies*.

Shona Erskine is lecturer in Dance at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowan University. She completed a MPsych(Industrial/Organisational Psychology)/PhD from The University of Melbourne that focused on youth dance practices in Australia. Her current performing activities included joining the Sue Healey Company for the new series, *The Curiosities* and working with Sally Richardson's Steamworks Productions for their new work *Eliza!* Research activities included the generation of performance psychology materials for WAAPA.

Jane Mullett, Research Fellow at RMIT University, has not only worked in the circus as a trapeze artist, but completed her doctorate on the evolution of contemporary circus. Her research work focuses on issues related to the circus industry including: quantitative research on the size and economic structure of the Australian circus industry, circus training, and the evolution of Australia's contemporary circus companies. She is currently working with Circus Oz on 2 research projects, and holds supporting roles at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus and the Australian Circus and Physical Theatre Association.

Joanne Tompkins is Professor in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland. Her current research includes 3D visualisation and modelling of theatre spaces; space in Australian and Canadian theatre; database of Australian performance; multicultural theories and drama, and intercultural performance. Her publications include *Unsettling Space: Contestations in Contemporary Australian Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), *Women's Intercultural Performance* (with Julie Holledge, Routledge 2000) and *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (with Helen Gilbert, Routledge 1996).