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Afterword

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AFTERWORD

Lindsey Mantoan

What happens to a conference when the time of it has ended? Where do the inspirations, memories, and creations it produced go?

In addition to arguing for a multiplicity of theoretical approaches to time and performance, this issue of Performance Research also guides readers through the time of P*Si* 19 at Stanford University. We organized this issue around the days of the conference, inviting those not able to attend the conference to experience, and those who were at Stanford to re-experience, its trajectory. Readers can move through this issue and thus the conference chronologically, mapping the events and conversations of each day with the linear, forward-marching progress of the conference. And yet readers, unlike conference participants, have the option to create a non-chronological encounter of P*Si* 19 by flipping around this issue, reading first an article from a plenary on Saturday and then an artist page from a praxis session on Thursday. In a way, this issue documents and archives the conference, but it also reproduces and rethinks conference time. The temporal reach of this issue extends past audience and performer, panels and plenaries, through the ageing of our bodies and the maturing and refining of our ideas.

A conference, like a performance, has its own hidden times: how long does it take to plan and organize panels, performances, plenaries? What is the cumulative travel time required to bring together 780 participants from China, India, Russia, Scandinavia, the Balkans, South America, Australia, France, Spain? Journals, likewise, offer their own complex temporalities. How much time is spent revising a conference paper into an article or a praxis session into an artist page? How long does it take to read a journal cover to cover, or to read a single essay? The disparate and asynchronous times of P*Si* 19 coalesce into the unique temporality of the conference, and disperse again through this journal.

Alice Rayner tell us in this issue that ‘something is always lost between the page and the performance.’ Indeed, something is lost between the page and the conference as well. Countless conference presentations start with the disclaimers “this is new research” and “I just started thinking about this.” Scholars and artists walk away from presentations invigorated by stimulating question-and-answer sessions even while thinking of better answers than the ones they gave, more poetic turns of phrase that could have elevated their presentations and workshops, a connection they only just made during the act of reading or performing research they spent hours, weeks, months, years developing. When the instance of the conference presentation ends, many wish for a do-over, for repetition with a difference. The opportunity to revise work for publication offers just such a chance. And yet, how many writers and artists re-read their article once it’s published and think that it’s absolutely perfect, no changes necessary? Ideas, theories, concepts evolve, and we evolve with them.

This work isn’t finished. Nor has it only just begun. It continues, folds back on itself, surges forward, remembers and interrupts.