



call for papers

Ulster University's research unit for Music, Drama, Performing Arts and Film/Screen Studies, in collaboration with LUXE, the Ritual Arts Forum, and the journal PRS: Performance, Religion and Spirituality,

presents

THE WORLD RITUAL ARTS SYMPOSIUM: Performance, Practice, and Presence

First Edition – 22–24 May 2026

Call for Papers, Performances, and Workshops

The **World Ritual Arts Symposium** is envisioned as an annual international gathering that brings together artists, scholars, practitioners, and members of the public to explore the dynamic intersections of ritual, performance, and embodied practice. Rooted in performance research and cultural engagement, the symposium fosters dialogue across disciplines and geographies, with a focus on lived experience, spiritual aesthetics, environmental consciousness, and decolonial approaches to performance.

The inaugural edition will take place from **22 to 24 May 2026** at **Ulster University, Derry~Londonderry campus**, in the historic Walled City of Derry, Northern Ireland (UK). The programme will include performances, workshops, roundtables, screenings, and participatory installations. We are honoured to welcome international guests, including spiritual guides, artists, and ritual specialists, alongside contributions from local and regional practitioners, students, independent researchers, and academics.

This first edition embraces a broad and inclusive approach, reflecting the growing global interest in intergenerational, transdisciplinary, and intercultural explorations of creativity, tradition, innovation, and spirituality. We invite proposals that interpret the theme **Performance, Practice, and Presence** through the lens of what we call Ritual Acts—expressions that engage with the transformative power of embodied ritual.

We welcome submissions in the following formats:

- **Papers and presentations** (20 minutes)
- **Performances** (20-50 minutes; duration negotiable with the organising team)
- **Workshops** (50 minutes)

The deadline for submissions is 31 January 2026. Please submit a **300-word proposal** and a **200-word biography** to: **Shamim Hasan** – Hasan-MS2@ulster.ac.uk or **Giuliano Campo** – g.campo@ulster.ac.uk

Evening performances and selected screenings will be open to the general public.

Featured Guests from Bahia, Brazil

Ekyedy Sinha – Priestess of Casa Branca

Gersonice Azevedo Brandão, known as Ekyedy Sinha, is a senior priestess at Terreiro da Casa Branca, Ilê Axé Iyá Nassô— one of the earliest and most respected Candomblé temples in Brazil. A daughter of Oxóssi, she is a ritual artist deeply versed in the sacred chants of the orixás. Her work bridges religion, culture, art, and education, including the project Na seiva da voz (“In the Sap of the Voice”), which reinterprets traditional chants dedicated to Ossain, the orixá of healing leaves.

Sinha received the title of Dottorressa Notório Saber from UFBA (Federal University of Bahia), recognising her distinguished expertise.

Candomblé is an Afro-Brazilian religion rooted in the spiritual traditions of West African peoples, particularly Yoruba, Bantu, and Fon. It emerged as a powerful act of cultural resistance during Brazil’s colonial period, preserving ancient beliefs



Photo Editora Barabô (Dadá Jaques)

under the guise of Catholicism. At its heart, Candomblé honours a pantheon of orixás, invoked through ritual, music, dance, and offerings. More than a religion, it is a living archive of African heritage, safeguarding languages, rhythms, and cosmologies.

Casa Branca do Engenho Velho, officially Ilê Axé Iyá Nassô Oká, is the oldest recognised Candomblé temple in Brazil. Founded in the early 19th century in Salvador, Bahia, it has shaped the Ketu nation of Candomblé and continues to serve as a spiritual and cultural reference point. Led by a lineage of powerful iyalorixás (priestesses), Casa Branca is a sanctuary of healing, education, and community, and has been designated a national heritage site by IPHAN.

Joice Aglaé Brondani – Theatre Director and Scholar



Joice Aglaé Brondani is a Brazilian actress, theatre director, and professor at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), where she teaches in both the undergraduate Theatre programme and the Graduate Programme in Performing Arts (PPGAC). Internationally recognised for her work on theatre and ritual, she bridges academic research, artistic creation, and cultural preservation.

Her scholarship explores masks, clowning, buffoonery, commedia dell'arte, and the relationship between popular culture and altered states of consciousness. She holds a PhD in Performing Arts from UFBA, with research conducted in collaboration with Università di Roma Tre and the Scuola Sperimentale dell'Attore in Italy. Her doctoral work examined the archetype of the buffoon in Brazilian popular spectacle traditions.

Joice has completed postdoctoral fellowships at UFBA, the University of Turin (UNITO), and the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), focusing on feminine mask archetypes, mythologies, and the embodiment of spiritual entities such as Iansã and Pombogiras. She is the founder of Cia Buffa de Teatro in Salvador and Bottega Buffa CircoVacanti in Italy, with performances presented across Europe and Brazil. Her work continues to shape the future of ritual performance and transcultural theatre.

Joice was initiated as an Ekedy in her terreiro “Ilê Asè Oba Ilesá.”

Keynote Speaker

Richard Gough – Theatre Director and Scholar

Richard Gough is Artistic Director of the Centre for Performance Research (CPR), a multi-faceted theatre organisation based in Wales with an international reach. He is Professor of Music & Performance at the University of South Wales, Cardiff, and Emeritus Professor of Aberystwyth University.

He is the General Editor and co-founder of *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* (published by Routledge), and publisher and series editor of *Performance Research Books*, including its imprints *Performance Books* and *Black Mountain Press*.

Gough was the founding President (1997–2001) of *Performance Studies international* (PSi) and has dedicated the last fifty years to developing and exploring interdisciplinary, experimental performance. He has curated and organised numerous international theatre projects — including conferences,



summer schools, and workshop festivals — and has produced nationwide tours of experimental theatre and traditional dance/theatre ensembles from around the world.

As a director, he has led over seventy productions, many of which have toured across Europe. He has also lectured and led workshops

throughout Europe, Australasia, China, Japan, the USA, the Philippines, Colombia, and Brazil. His work consistently seeks to push the boundaries of performance and disciplinary practice.

Registration and Fees

To ensure broad access, the symposium will adopt a tiered and inclusive pricing model

Category	Early Bird	Standard
-Institution-supported (Band A)	£80	£100
-Freelancers/Small or non-funded organisations	£30	£40

-Low/no income, general audience, invited
contributors from Bands B/C countries

Free

Free

Early Bird Deadline: Friday, 28 February 2026

Final Registration Deadline: Friday, 25 April 2026

The deadline for submissions is 31 January 2026.

You can register by following this link:

[WRAS registration](#)

For practical information, please contact: ritualartssymposium@gmail.com



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