



Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

**BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus**

A TWO-DAY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# Performing Worlds:

## Politics, Performativity and Cultural Memory



**Abstract Submission Deadline:**

**1<sup>st</sup> January 2026**

**Notification of Acceptance:**

**10<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**Registration Opens:**

**15<sup>th</sup> January 2026**



Performance and performativity are central to how communities stage, sustain, and see their worlds. They work as vessels that allow the fashioning of identities and the rites that forge arenas for **memory, negotiation, and transformation**. Often described as an elusive spectre, **indigeneity** provides one **crucial lens** for understanding the twin dynamics of these concepts. Conventionally, indigeneity has been understood as the historical identity of communities rooted in specific geographies and as guardians of knowledge systems that contest dominant discourses. More recent scholarship instead emphasises **indigeneity as fluid and performative**. As Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel observe, “**being Indigenous means thinking, speaking and acting with the conscious intent of regenerating one’s indigeneity**”. Approaching performances of indigeneity from this perspective opens up various forms of indigenous self-representation, including music, dance, rituals and drama, and visual arts.

At the same time, **performance and performativity** extend well beyond Indigenous contexts. They shape popular cinema, sports, heritage tourism, museum practices, digital media, and everyday acts of social belonging. These varied practices showcase how cultural memory is continuously rehearsed, revealing the braided narratives of politics, aesthetics and identity. Here, performance functions – as Helen Gilbert reminds us – as an “**analytical tool**” for understanding the evolution of cultural identities across centuries. This conference seeks to foster interdisciplinary dialogue between **performance as embodied practice and performativity as a broader cultural process**. It aims to map new approaches to cultural memory across Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds, while also providing a platform for networking among scholars, artists and practitioners. With the objective of exploring how Indigenous or non-Indigenous worlds are “performed,” and how performances and performativity serve as key modes for navigating identity, belonging, and resistance, the conference welcomes submissions for paper presentations for the following two tracks:



A traditional Indian painting of a dancing girl and a musician. The dancing girl is in the foreground, wearing a pink sari and a white turban, performing a circular dance. Behind her, a musician in a green and gold robe plays a long, curved wind instrument. The background is a simple, light-colored wash.

## Track 1: Poetics of Performance

- Embodied practices and knowledge traditions
- Folk rituals and sacred figures
- Indigenous epistemologies
- Performance ecologies
- Methodological approaches to folk and tribal performance
- Training and pedagogy
- Digital futures and archival practices
- Folk narratives and storytelling traditions
- Intersections of class, caste, race, gender and sexuality in performance
- Migrant aesthetics
- Aesthetics of the folk and the tribal in Western and non-Western traditions

## Track 2: Politics of Performativity

- Mediated and representational practices
- Ritualised and popular sports
- Cinema, mass media and popular culture
- Heritage, tourism and curation practices
- Afterlives of performance in literary texts
- Marginalized voices
- Theoretical approaches to performativity

### Submission Guidelines:

Abstract of **200** words (MS Word, Times New Roman, 12 Font)

**Five keywords** and a biographical note

Email: [bitsperformativity@gmail.com](mailto:bitsperformativity@gmail.com).

### Registration Fees:

(Food included)

Faculty Members: Rs 4000

Research Scholars/Students: Rs 2000

Support with accommodation will be provided upon request

### Publication:

Only a handful of papers selected from those presented through rigorous anonymous peer review may be published in a reputed journal/anthology. The name of the publisher will be circulated once decided.

### Conference Coordinator:

**Prof. Prateek, Assistant Professor**

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus

#### Image credits:

*Four Acrobats along with Two Dancing Girls and a Musician.* Gouache Painting by an Indian Painter. 1 painting: gouache, with pen and ink, [between 1800 and 1899?]. Wellcome Collection, JSTOR, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.36643992>. Accessed 31 Oct. 2025.

*Pandit, Seu. Dancing Villagers,* 1680-1740, LACMA, <https://collections.lacma.org/node/238783>

## Tracks

Poetics of Performance  
Politics of Performance

## Lead Faculty

Prof. Paul Mathew  
Prof. C. Vijayakumar

## Distinguished Speakers

### **Urvashi Butalia**

Writer, publisher, and public intellectual; co-founder of Kali for Women and founder-director of Zubaan Books

### **Prof. Bryce Lease**

Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, UK

### **Prof. Carl Lavery**

Professor of Theatre and Performance, University of Glasgow, UK

### **Prof. Aruni Kashyap**

Writer, scholar, and Associate Professor of English, University of Georgia, USA

### **Prof. Natalie Lazaroo**

Performer and Senior Lecturer in Applied Theatre, Griffith University, Australia

### **Prof. Ayla Joncheere**

Cultural entrepreneur, performer, and Associate Professor of Performance, Poornima University, India

## Puppetry Workshop

### **Our Stories in Y(our) Hands: *Salaki Sutrada Gombeyaata* (A Family Tradition)**

#### **Co-ordinator: Ms Ranjini Nadig**

Eighth-generation puppeteer of the Salaki Sutrada Gombeyaata tradition  
PhD scholar, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus

## Cultural Performance

### **Meera**

A contemporary adaptation of Euripides' *Medea*, directed by Siya Madan and Adhyayan Pandey, students of BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus

## Conference Committee

### **Leadership**

### **Prof. V Ramgopal Rao,**

Vice-Chancellor, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus

### **Prof. Sudhirkumar Barai,**

Director, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus

### **Prof. Sangeeta Sharma**

Head of Department, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus

### **Chairperson**

### **Prof. Prateek**

### **Convenor**

### **Prof. Devika**

### **Co-Convenors**

### **Prof. Sanjiv Kumar Choudhary**

