Approaching Performance Archives (Bochum, 25-27 Feb 26)

Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Seminar fu r Slavistik & Lotman-Institut fu r russische Kulturstudien, Feb 25–27, 2026

Valeriy Zolotukhin

International Conference:
Approaching Performance Archives in the Age of Media Overload /
Zugänge zu Performance-Archiven im Zeitalter der Medienüberflutung.

Venue: Ruhr-Universität Bochum, HGB 03/20.

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The conference explores how the documentation of performance practices—such as theatre, oral folklore, performance art, and literary readings—functions as a methodological tool for understanding performance itself. Focusing on mediated spoken word in East and Central Europe, it brings together perspectives from literary studies, performance theory, curatorial practice, and feminist critique.

Participants examine how practices of documenting mediated performance shape its conceptualization across different media. While the growing presence of online streaming, Zoom-based performances, and performance-related media artifacts in museums highlights the contemporary relevance of this topic, the conference moves beyond a purely technological perspective. It addresses broader shifts in how performance is understood in its mediated forms and how archival practices influence both its production and reception. A central theme concerns historical debates on the ephemerality of performance and alternative modes of documentation that challenge binaries such as presence versus mediation or physicality versus notation. Special attention is given to the cases that proposed non-technological or semi-notational forms of documentation, such as scores, graphic layouts, and typographic experiments, which functioned as open frameworks for interpretation and reperforming.

Revisiting these strategies offers critical perspectives on archival practices in an age of media overabundance. The conference also addresses mediated performance as a mode of political expression and resistance in East and Central Europe. In contrast to Western contexts, where self-archiving in performance art often emerged from institutional marginalization, documentation practices in the East frequently developed in response to political repression—for example, in the self-archiving methods of the Collective Actions group, active in Moscow since the mid-1970s. Participants of the conference will approach mediatized poetry and performance art as forms of resistance, enabling artists to reach new audiences and maintain dialogue despite political constraints—an issue once again relevant in today’s climate.

Rather than reinforcing disciplinary divides between theatre and performance studies and literary studies, the conference seeks to explore their intersections and mutual transformations. It revisits how performance practices and media technologies since the late nineteenth century have reshaped literary scholarship by foregrounding orality, embodiment, and the material conditions of reception.
Finally, the conference brings together contributions that engages with questions of access to performance archives. While digitization has dramatically expanded the availability of historical sound and video recordings, new interpretative and curatorial frameworks are needed to make these materials meaningful for contemporary audiences. Addressing this challenge, the conference examines strategies for engaging critically with performance archives in the context of digital media saturation.

Conference languages: English and German.

Program and Time Schedule

Thursday, 26 February

10:00–10:15
Opening of the Conference
Welcome greetings

10:15–11:45
Panel 1: Zones of Convergence: At the Crossroads of Literary, Media, and Performance Studies
• Jason Camlot — Performing the Archive: Methods of Sounding Poetry for Temporal Dissonance
• Dorota Sajewska — Self-Erasure of the Performer: Documenting the Limits of Human Existence

Coffee Break

12:00–13:30
Panel 2: Between Oppression and Emancipation: The Political and Ideological Contexts of Mediatized Performance
• Dorota Sosnowska — Body as Medium: Contemporary Politics of Liveness in the Polish Context
• Pavel Arsenev — From Poetic Actions to Unidentified Literary Objects: The Evolution of Politically Active Poetry in Russia in Recent Decades

Lunch Break

14:45–16:15
Panel 3: Understanding Performance and Literature in a Mediatized Culture
• Isobel Palmer — Listening in/to the Archive
• Daria Baryshnikova — From Page to Multi-Screen: Performing B. S. Johnson’s House Mother Normal in an Age of Media Overload

Friday, 27 February

10:00–11:30
Panel 4: Beyond the Dichotomy of the Physical and the Symbolic

Processed by Media vs. Produced by Media: The Affective Potential of Performance and Its Archive
• Tancredi Gusman — Performing Evidence: Documentation, Reactivation, and the Representation of Performance Art
• Valeriy Zolotukhin — “Flower Without Scent”: (Counter-)Strategies of Performance Archiving in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Coffee Break

11:45–13:15
Panel 5: Re-Using, Re-Mixing, Re-Working, and Displaying Performance Archives
• Sabine Hänsgen — The Birth of Performance from the Spirit of Poetry in Eastern European Art Scenes: A Media-Archaeological Reconstruction
• Bettina Knaup — Archival Chain Reactions, Methods of Precarious Continuity: re.act.feminism – a Performing Archive

Lunch Break

14:30–16:00
Panel 6: Processed by Media vs. Produced by Media: The Affective Potential of Performance and Its Archive
• Tomáš Glanc — Recording Poetry
• Pavel Novotný — Mein Weltall: Text – Sound – Image – Movement

Coffee Break

16:15–17:30
Panel 7: Paper Company Project: Inventing the Archive
• Yu Araki, Masaru Ito — Authenticity and the Memory of a Non-Existent Performance

Accompanying program

Wednesday, 25 February

17:30–20:00
Fragile (Khrupkiy / Хрупкий), 2025
Directed by Egor Isaev
Camera by Egor Isaev
Screenplay by Egor Isaev and Kostya Koryagin
Edited by Kostya Koryagin
Assistants: Oleg Rybenko, Alexandr Maduev
Language: Russian (with English subtitles)
The documentary film follows Khrupkiy (Fragile), a small independent performance festival in Moscow that emerged as a self-organized initiative founded by Artyom Tomilov and Vanya Demidkin in 2024. Conceived as a space of exchange between artists based in Russia and abroad—many of whom left the country in protest against Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine—the festival brought together performances created remotely or in hybrid formats. Due to its anti-war stance

and the absence of institutional support, Khrupkiy took place unofficially, in semi-private locations and without public announcement.
On the eve of its second edition, held in St. Petersburg in April 2024, the venue was visited by the police. Shortly thereafter, the prosecutor's office demanded that the event be cancelled, forcing the organizers to shift the program into a closed, "secret" format accessible only by personal invitation. Through the lens of transience, the film reflects on performance as something that exists on the threshold between visibility and disappearance, and on documentation as a gesture that cannot be shown in the place where it was made.

This screening is organized with the support of the SCIENCE AT RISK Emergency Office.

It will be followed by a discussion with Egor Isaev and Kostya Koryagin.

Thursday, 26 February

16:30–18:30
Poetry Readings
• Pavel Novotný
• Pavel Arsenev. Text-performance presenting the book Russisch als Nicht-Muttersprache (ciconia ciconia Verlag, 2025)

Reference:
CONF: Approaching Performance Archives (Bochum, 25-27 Feb 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 18, 2026 (accessed Nov 25, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51515>.