

Poetry Off the Page, Around the Globe

Advances in Poetry Performance Research



13th–14th June 2025

University of Vienna, Austria
& Literaturhaus Wien, Austria

Deadline for Abstracts:
20 December 2024

[in-person/online]

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. Cornelia Gräbner (*Lancaster University, UK*)

Shantanu Anand (*poet, co-founder of Airplane Poetry Movement, India*)

Call for Papers

In recent decades, poetry performance has been one of the fastest growing arts practices internationally. Since movements such as Beat poetry, jazz poetry, and poetry slam have inspired performance scenes across the English-speaking world and beyond, innovative performance styles have emerged alongside new genres and styles of composition geared towards oral performance. The global reach of spoken word poetry has become highly noticeable in the arena of slam, evidenced by the diverse programmes of initiatives such as the 2005 'Poetry International World Slampionship' in Rotterdam, the 'Coupe du Monde de Poésie' in France (since 2007), and the recently established 'World Poetry Slam Organization'. The popularity of performed poetry has also been aided by the emergence of numerous national and international spoken word festivals – the Basque 'Ahoz Aho' Festival, the 'Shoko' International Spoken Word & Hip Hop Festival in Zimbabwe, and 'Spoken Fest' in India are just three cases in point here – and it has been fueled, of course, by rapidly evolving media technologies. Today, spoken poetry is flourishing on the world wide web, granting us digitally mediated access to poetic voices and attracting audiences far beyond the reach of most contemporary print publishers of poetry. Moreover, as a practice of declaiming, staging, and questioning identities, poetry performance has intersected with vital cultural and socio-political discourses across the globe.

While orality has clearly played a vital role in the poetry of this recent period, academic scholarship has yet to catch up with the diverse aesthetic and cultural work of contemporary spoken word. Poetry performance studies has only recently begun to take hold as a scholarly discipline, with research projects such as 'Poetry in the Digital Age' (Univ. Hamburg), 'Poetic Justice Values' (Univ. of Cambridge), 'Festival as Form' (Queen Mary Univ. London), and our own 'Poetry Off the Page' project (Univ. of Vienna) now contributing to its consolidation.

In the British and North American contexts, early probing into the specific format and politics of poetry slam (Somers-Willet; Gregory) and theorising of live poetry (Bernstein; Middleton; Novak) has led to a deeper investigation into various strands of poetry performance and their origins in avant-garde/alternative poetic traditions (see also Pfeiler; Johnson; Hoffman; Wheeler; Bauridl; Bearder; English & McGowan Kennedy & Tuma; Severin). Yet spoken word scholarship has often privileged British/North American performance practices in its discourse. While studies such as Christian Habekost's (1993) and Carolyn Cooper's (1995) on African-Caribbean dub poetry, Pamela Dube's on Canadian and South African performance poetry (1997), Cornelia Gräbner and Arturo Casas Vales's interdisciplinary collection *Performing Poetry: Body, Place and Rhythm in the Poetry Performance* (2011), or Frieder von Ammon's on Austrian avant-garde performance (2018) shed light on a range of performance cultures, a comprehensive picture of spoken word poetics from around the globe is yet to emerge, where scholars and stakeholders alike are in conversation with each other in an equitable way. The conference, "Poetry Off the Page, Around the Globe" is a step in that direction.

This conference will be a forum for new research on contemporary poetry performance and spoken word poetry from around the globe. Attending to local/national practices as well as transnational movements, it aims to shed new light on the aesthetics, politics, medialities, and histories of performed poetry, as well as to advance the theory and methodology of poetry performance studies.

We warmly invite proposals for presentations of **15-20 minutes** in **English**. While this is an academic conference, we also welcome proposals from practitioners who speak about their own work in a self-reflexive, critically informed manner.

Areas of discussion might include (but are not limited to):

- * Spoken-word poetry and its relationship with the visual arts/music/dance/performance art/theatre/comedy
- * The multiple heritages of contemporary spoken word poetry
- * Avant-garde poetic performances since the 1960s and their use of diverse media
- * Thinking poetry performance with/against technology
- * Spoken-word poetry's relation with digital media
- * Formats and genres of oral poetry performance (slam, open mic, poetry trails, spoken word theatre, one-person show, rap, poetry films, spoken word clips,...)
- * Poetry performance communities, coteries, audiences
- * Spoken word poetry and/as creative industry
- * Poetry, identity, and social justice: performed poetry and its relationship with race, gender, ability, heritage, ...
- * Advances in spoken word pedagogy
- * Methods of poetry performance research
- * Poetry performance and critical/ cultural/ literary theory

Please email **abstracts** of no more than 250 words and a **short bio** (maximum 80 words, in the same document) to: popconf2025@univie.ac.at.

Deadline: 20 December 2024.

We aim to **notify** respondents to the first call by 10th January 2025 (this is particularly to accommodate international delegates who must expect a lengthy visa application process). A second call – with a deadline in early February – will be issued in November.

The conference will form the basis for a **peer-reviewed special issue** that will be published open access.

'Poetry Off the Page, Around the Globe' will be an **in-person** event with options for **remote** attendance. Attendance will be free. Limited travel subsidies are available.

The conference will include an **evening programme** of performances by international and local spoken word poets, followed by an open mic.

You can find out more about the conference on <https://popconf2025.univie.ac.at/>.

For information about the Poetry Off the Page project, our data policy, our project blog and podcast, see www.poetryoffthepage.net.

Convenors:

Shefali Banerji M.A. | Dr. Rachel Bolle-Debessay | Assoc. Prof. Julia Lajta-Novak
(University of Vienna)