

# THE LECTURE AS PERFORMANCE: Theatricality in the Academy

## DESCRIPTION

This project begins a theoretical and historical investigation of the lecture as a form of performance and asks us to consider how the academic lecturer engages in overt and implicit acts of theatrical invention. As a central feature of Western pedagogy for more than 2500 years, the lecture is a thoroughly conventionalized and well-rehearsed mode of knowledge distribution. While we are often affected by the embodied presence of a lecturer—even drawn to witness a certain celebrated speaker in the flesh—this vital aspect of the form is often neglected as we focus upon the lecture as a site for the abstract, disembodied, transmission of knowledge. Over the last century artists and academics have staged what we might call *lecture performances* that negotiate the lecture as a medium for the dissemination and critique of knowledge production. They have played with the transmission of faulty information (i.e., presenting the fictional as factual) or the status of unauthorized speech (i.e., impersonating qualified characters) to ask questions about the power relations embedded in the notion of authentic knowledge.

This research project was comprised of two related tracks:

- 1) I researched and wrote on the history of the lecture as the most direct intersection between performance and education, while reckoning with artistic use of the medium in the work of John Cage, Pablo Helguera, and Andrea Fraser, among others.
- 2) I explored the practice of lecture performance by staging several such events at conferences and in theatrical sites that I, myself, performed.

## OUTCOMES

### RESEARCH PRESENTATION:

•“Theatricality and the Lecture: the performance practice of research,” American Society for Theatre Research, Dallas, TX, November 2013

### LECTURE PERFORMANCES:

•“Occupy the Future: Protesting Narrative Time on Wall Street.” Performance Studies international #19, Stanford University, June 2013

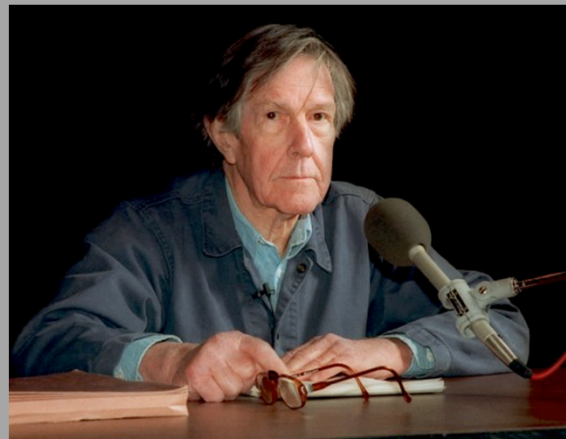
•“Imagined Theatres: staged readings from a provisional universe,” Association for Theatre in Higher Education, Scottsdale, AZ, July 2014

•“Imagined Theatres: staged readings from a provisional universe,” Summerhall, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Scotland, August 2014

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JOHN CAGE's deconstruction of the lecture formed the central case study for my first research project.



### LECTURE ON NOTHING

I am here , and there is nothing to say .  
If among you are  
those who wish to get somewhere , let them leave at  
any moment . What we re-quire is  
silence ; but what silence requires  
is that I go on talking . Give any one thought  
a push : it falls down easily  
; but the pusher and the pushed pro-duce that enter-  
tainment called a dis-cussion .  
Shall we have one later ?  
Or we could simply de-cide not to have a dis-  
cussion . What ever you like . But  
now there are silences and the  
words make help make the



THE IMAGINED THEATRES are a series of lecture performances interrogating the conventions of the theatre and the lecture from within a performance. They are staged in academic and theatrical settings as solos or with other artist-scholars.