

African Performance Review

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AfTA Noticeboard

Call for Participants

AfTA 2026 Conference – 8-10 July 2026

Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa¹

2026 Annual International Conference of the African Theatre Association (AfTA)

Interartistic Afrikan* performing arts in the 21st century

De/Post-colonial Performance, Places, Pedagogies

Since its entanglement with Europe and the rest of the western world due to the so-called Voyages of Discovery, the rise of Humanism, and the Age of Enlightenment between the 15th and 19th centuries, Afrika has enjoyed and endured a curiously fascinating relationship with the west and the Other, like many other parts of the world.

In this call for papers, our designation of the relationship between Afrika, the west, and the Other as one that has been marked by endurance is deliberate, as the relationship has simultaneously been characterised by fascination. The designation is deliberate because although Afrika was quick to accommodate the colonial presence and assimilate new religions, new ways of life, and new epistemologies, Afrika's entanglement with the west and the Other came at great cost to the continent. The entanglement often happened under duress and sometimes at great cost to the

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continent's identity and sense of self-dignity. Some of these disruptions and entanglements continue to reverberate in ways that are still felt on the continent. Yet, in many ways and quite paradoxically, Afrika was quite receptive to the cultural and ideological winds of change that came to it following the western presence. Consequently, today the post-colonial identity of Afrika has become hybrid and carnivalesque. Afrikan identity is hybrid and carnivalesque in ways that blend the Indigenous and the imported in ways that have confounded both the Indigene and the former coloniser. Nowhere has the apparent 'clash' and blend between the Indigenous and the alien played out more poignantly and in such curious and fascinating ways than in the Afrikan continent's vast array of performing art forms. It is in this myriad interartistic blend of forms, ranging from drama and theatre to design and visual arts, as well as music, song, and dance, that the confluence or clash between so-called western (post)modernity on the one hand and Indigenous traditions on the other has played out.

Notwithstanding the fascinating instances of hybridity that have come to characterise contemporary performing arts in Afrika. Scholars and artists in Afrika and its diaspora today have been assailed by a new wave of resistance against the western presence and its aftermaths in some peculiar ways. Recoiling from what they perceive as the cultural and epistemic relegation and denigration of Indigenous practices and forms, these researchers, scholars, and artists have begun to question the place and provenance of western (post)modernity and its aesthetics on the continent's various forms of performance and art. Since the turn of the new millennium, a significant number of Afrikan scholars, researchers and performing artists at home and abroad are now engaged on a relentless quest to decolonise these forms ostensibly aiming to liberate these forms from what they perceive as their entrenchment in predominantly colonialist western epistemologies and ways of being. This liberatory form has come to be known as the decolonial turn. Cognisant of the long history of the supposed superiority of the western canon, its forms, and epistemes in defining other parts of the globe and their practices, the decolonial turn is an academic project. The project proposes that the non-western world, such as Afrika and its diaspora, decolonise fully and re-centre its own cultural practices and ways of knowing and

doing. Afrika and its diaspora must decidedly make a break with the west and its epistemes as it begins to define and delineate its own cultures, practices, and ways of knowing on its own terms that transcend the west and its ways of knowing.

One such direct divergence is the notion that the performing arts are intrinsically interartistic, denoting a field where different parts of any one performance discipline intersect. Interartistic creation, for its part, refers more specifically to “creative processes based on complex dialogues between various practices that preserve their autonomy” (Lesage, 2008). The preference is for *interartistic* as a term within the arts disciplines rather than *interdisciplinary* or *multidisciplinary*, where the notion of discipline is associated with the idea of rules, norms, and borders that delimit an artistic field. Afrikan performing arts coalesce all drama, theatre, dance, song, and music, as well as denote a field where these arts intersect.

With this brief framing background, we invite scholars, performers, and researchers with an interest in performance and design arts of Afrika and the diaspora in its various manifestations to submit proposals for paper presentations, posters, and panel discussions revolving around the following main theme and sub-themes. Areas of investigation might intersect.

**The conscious choice to make use of the “k” in the Afrikan for the title is based on the factor that most vernacular or traditional languages on the continent spell Afrika with a K. Therefore, the use of K is germane to us. The embracing K symbolises a kind of Lingua Afrikana, although coming from more than one Afrikan language.*

Please complete the survey below where you will be required to upload your 300-word abstracts and a 150-word short bio by **1 February 2026**:

APPLICATION FORM – [CLICK HERE](#)

For more information please visit the AfTA webpage

When making contact, please use both emails below:

Main theme: Interartistic Afrikan performing arts in the 21st century: *De/Post-colonial Performance, Places, Pedagogies*

Sub-theme categories

1. Creative industries and cultural discourses of the Global South
 - Embodiment of folklore in performance
 - Manifestations of Afrikan environmental ecologies and cosmologies
 - CCI's memory and ancestry
 - Theatre and performance in AIKS
2. Artivism activations in performance and theatre
 - Gender representation and performativity
 - Afrikan visual and performance redress
 - Queer performance and the non-binary aesthetics
 - Voices from the margins and/or marginalised voices
3. De/post -colonial aesthetics and experiential design
 - (re)Envisaging digital Afrikan technologies and performance modes
 - (re)Confirming performance aesthetics – site-specific and found space theatre
 - New knowledge in music composition and Afrikan scores
 - Re-thinking patrimony in contemporary approaches to applied theatre
4. Entanglements in contemporary performance practice
 - Afrikan performance with regard to plurality and the pluriverse
 - Urban theatre and politics of public spaces
 - Music and dance within Afrikan performance and theatre making
 - Archival bodies emergent in somatic and embodied practice
5. Language as innovation and/or disruption
 - Language, translation, and semiotics in performance
 - Orality as a definition of new realities
 - Invocation of myths and legends in contemporary performance
 - Migration, memory, and the diaspora
6. New epistemes, new theories, and new pedagogies

- Interartistic arts pedagogies
- Technological innovation in performing arts educational practice
- Training and pedagogy: Bridging tradition and innovation
- Disrupting the canons of performing arts education curricula and institutional practice

Prof Janine Lewis and Prof Owen Seda

Convenors