

Performing as Knowing : Reflecting on the Recentring AfroAsia project's musical modes of enquiry

Alongside pursuing a range of archaeological, historical and sociological questions, a notable goal of the multi-institutional Recentring AfroAsia project (RAA) has been to produce contemporary musical renditions and narratives around the centuries-long historical transmission of goods, people and ideas across and beyond the Indian ocean. In this hybrid panel (physical and online), we focus on the affordances of these performances as a mode of knowledge production, foregrounding what it means to bring what Sumangala Damodaran has called “aesthetic acuity” into this transdisciplinary research enterprise, not only as the subject of enquiry but as part of its methodology. Positioning RAA’s musical modes of enquiry not only as prompts for research or as platforms for dissemination, but at the heart of the project’s vision has been one of its major contributions. We reflect, thus, on the ways in which RAA has placed musical performance in a closer relationship with more established ways of knowing in the social sciences and humanities. While one needs to be cognisant of the limitations of this way of knowing too, as with any other, we will dwell on the ways in which these performances have widened the registers in which research within the project has been conducted. We locate this conversation, then, within the broader turn to performance as research in advancing the ongoing decolonisation of the university, a central priority in the South African and broader global Southern contexts from which we write.

Panellists:

1. Prof. Sumangala Damodaran, Ambedkar University Delhi (corresponding presenter)
2. Prof. Ari Sitas, Emeritus Professor, UCT
3. Prof. Dilip Menon, Wits
4. Dr. Bronwyn Clacherty, UCT
5. Dr. Janie Cole, UCT
6. Dr. Cara Stacey, NWU
7. Dr. Sazi Dlamini, UKZN
8. Mark Aranha, WSOA PhD candidate
9. Prof. Brett Pyper (Wits)

Keywords:

Artistic research, transdisciplinarity, performance, Afro-Asia