What Can a Body Do? – Professor Joseph Roach (virtual keynote) – Yale University (USA)

Drawing on the findings of the World Performance Project and (WPP) and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies at Yale (IPSY) in theater, dance, and performance art, this paper will address Baruch Spinoza’s very practical philosophical question: “What can a body do?” Hands-on research in the performing arts suggests many answers, the gist of which is summarized by actor-theorist Benjamin Spatz in one: “A body can mind.” In What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research (Routledge, forthcoming), Spatz critiques The Player’s Passion and tests its claims against subsequent findings, including those of cognitive neuroscience. My paper will respond to this critique, but it will also offer recognition and gratitude to the many scholars in theater and performance studies, Australians prominent among them, who have inspired, engaged, challenged, and gone beyond my work since 1985.

Biography
A theatre historian, stage director, and performance studies scholar, Joseph Roach is the author of The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting (1985), Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance (1996) and It (2007). He is the editor (with Janelle Reinelt) of Critical Theory and Performance (2nd edition, revised 2007) and Changing the Subject: Marvin Carlson and Theatre Studies, 1959-2009 (2009). His publications have been recognized by the James Russell Lowell Prize from the Modern Language Association, the Barnard Hewitt Award in Theatre History, and the Joe E. Calloway Prize for Drama. Before coming to Yale, he chaired the Department of Performing Arts at Washington University in St. Louis, the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre at Northwestern University, and the Department of Performance Studies in the Tisch School of Arts at NYU. He is the recipient of a Lifetime Distinguished Scholar Award from the American Society for Theatre Research and a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which funds the World Performance Project at Yale. In 2009, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Warwick (UK) and the Fletcher Jones Distinguished Fellowship from the Huntington Library.

“There’s no Mentality to It”: Thinking and the Arts of Acting - Professor Evelyn Tribble – University of Otago (NZ)

“Thinking” is often viewed with suspicion in acting theory and acting lore – “Don’t think, do!” is a common injunction. Actors often fear being ‘in their heads,’ approaching acting intellectually rather than experientially. Indeed much of the discourse around acting is structured around persistent binaries such as inside-out (‘method’) versus outside-in (‘technique’), thinking versus doing, emotion versus reason, and so on. A related term is “thinking with the body,” a phrase that is often deployed to reverse traditional mind/body distinctions and to privilege a form of so-called bodily intelligence. This talk examines what is meant by ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ in the light of recent research on Distributed Cognition and kinesic intelligence.

Biography
Evelyn B. Tribble is Professor and Donald Collie Chair of English at the University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ. She is the author of Margins and Marginality: The Printed Page in Early Modern England (Virginia, 1993); Writing Material: Readings from Plato to the Digital Age (with Anne Trubek, Longmans, 2003); Cognitive Ecologies and the History of Remembering (with Nicholas Keene, Palgrave, 2011); and Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare’s Theatre, Palgrave, 2011). She has also published scholarly articles in Shakespeare Quarterly, Shakespeare; Shakespeare Survey; Shakespeare Studies; and Textual Practice, among others.