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contact
Patrick Barber, publisher
patrick@impellerpress.com
(503) 319-1595

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Organizational Performance Art

Holding Space for Joy and Possibility

BY ALISSA SCHWARTZ

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Organizational Performance Art is a holding space art. Holding space is witnessing. Witnessing is performing. Performing is playing. Playing is dancing. Dancing is delighting. Delighting is co-creating the conditions for thriving and liberation. And that is what it's all about.

“Organizational Performance Art is a radical approach to transforming organizations.”

— Robert Gass, EdD, co-founder, Rockwood Leadership Institute

THE WORKPLACE, in both its physical and virtual manifestations, offers productive possibilities and space for joy. *Organizational Performance Art: Holding Space for Joy and Possibility* is a vibrant memoir and inspirational manual that examines how the concepts and practices of several performance arts traditions and philosophies—avant-garde theater, social constructionism, and shamanic practice—support organizations and communities in communal thriving and liberation.

An artistic stance towards organizational change does not just offer band-aid solutions to complex challenges; it is a way of harnessing imagination and a willingness to dance with the unknown in service to social justice and equity. *Organizational Performance Art* shows how to turn drab workplace routine into creative performance, isolation into positive connectivity, anxiety into openness, and hierarchal rigidity into collaborative teamwork.

In a world teeming with trauma and inequity, Schwartz offers her readers space to thrive. To imagine. To dance.



Alissa Schwartz, MSW, PhD, Principal of Solid Fire Consulting, is a master facilitator and organizational culture builder with over 25 years of experience working with groups. She is co-editor and chapter author of a special issue of *New Directions in Evaluation* that focuses on the intersectionalities of evaluation and facilitation and holds a PhD from Columbia University, where she studied organizational psychology and behavior.

In an earlier iteration of her ongoing fascination with group process, Alissa created and directed avant-garde theater and performance. This early influence sneakily shows up in her current consulting work, as well.

Alissa is based out of Lenapehoking/Brooklyn, where she parents, grandparents, bikes, practices yoga, and occasionally performs with Bread & Puppet Theater and in her own work. Learn more about her work and writing at www.solidfireconsulting.com.

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR *ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE ART*

“*Organizational Performance Art* is a radical approach to transforming organizations. Alissa brings her ideas to life with stories from theater, performance art, political protest, parenting, shamanism, and her work with organizations to challenge the frames and limitations of traditional organizational development. We are invited to be and work in ways that are more collaborative, real, present, intuitive, uncertain, passionate, and emergent. Open the book, open your senses, and come take the journey!”

— **Robert Gass**, EdD, co-founder, Rockwood Leadership Institute

“*Organizational Performance Art* is a delightful tribute to Alissa Schwartz’s rich journey and powerful work—dancing between worlds. It is an inspiration to those of us who aspire to make visible the creative and caring potential in all social systems.”

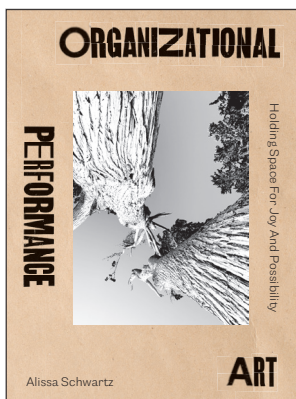
— **Arawana Hayashi**, Director of Social Presencing Theater at the Presencing Institute

“*Organizational Performance Art* is grounded in the body, and also it is more than the body. It is a metaphor for tending to the complexity of an organization as a container for collective sense-making and action.”

— from the foreword by **Susan Misra**, principal of Aurora Commons and co-author of *Influencing Complex Systems Change*

“Alissa’s visceral joy in working with groups is ever present. She pulls away the fourth wall and welcomes us in. She takes us through homes, fields, workplaces, stages, and beaches, inviting us to be authentic in each of them, even when it is uncomfortable. In a time when old masks are crumbling and organizational structures are in dire need of change, Alissa shows us how to embrace the unknown and step into an unpredictable and ultimately more connected way of being together.”

— **Helen Klonaris**, author, *If I Had the Wings*



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