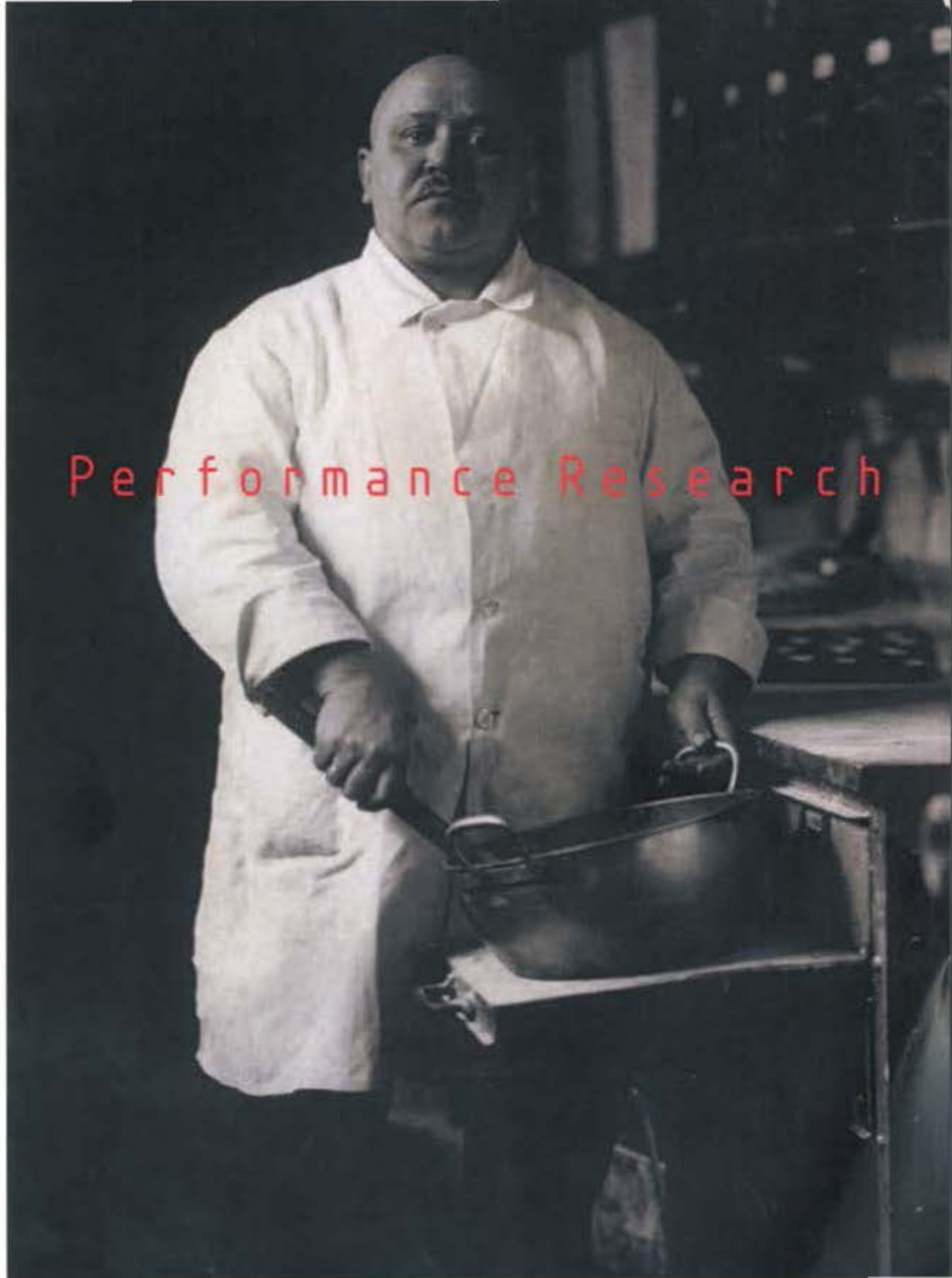


# Cooking

Performance Research



# on pickling

LAURIE BETH CLARK LI CHIAO-PING MICHAEL PETERSON DOUGLAS ROSENBERG

SCRUB CUCUMBERS (OR TARTS)

HEAT WATER IN LARGE POT

ADD: 1 TBS SALT PER

1/2 CUP GARLIC  
PICKLING SPICE

3 TBS WHITE VINEGAR

## Joyce's Pickles

Scrub cucumbers.

Chop garlic.

Chop dill.

Boil water, kosher salt,

white vinegar, spices.

Layer cucumbers,

garlic, and dill.

Pour liquid into crock until full.

Place a plate on top.

Store in a cool dark place.

Check pickles in about 10 days.



The Clark-Li-Rosenberg-Peterson cornichon of Madison, Wisconsin, is a superior gherkin, notable for its relentless garlic. Its aroma stalks your nostrils like a smart-bomb and then explodes in your mouth, the aftermath hovering insistently over the back of the tongue like a welcome memory. Its cold center is a salty alarm, while its gradually yielding texture works like Marcel's 'petite madeleine', taking one back to the Second Avenue Deli, to Junior's, to Katz's, to.... Resonating through the taste buds like a klezmer riot, such a cucumber certainly might have moved Shakespeare to say of it: "This was a pickle".

Noël Carroll,  
Philosopher

**Cooking by Artists** I never liked the phrase "performance by artists" as a way to describe live art/performance art. It sounds clubby and exclusive; it tries to generate a practice based on a class of participants. But cooking by artists? One may be ambivalent about whether artists should make performance, but surely art can only be improved if artists cook? Staging cooking as art is another question altogether; so is treating cooking as if it were art. But for learning the virtues of patience, attention to detail, reverence for both tradition and innovation, and that the outcome of a process is not a product but an element of the next process (eating), cooking is a practice which can be universally recommended to artists, and particularly to performance artists. And if we pay attention to cooking by artists, maybe it's not so much to watch extraordinary people do ordinary things, but to notice that even artists can cook.

Cooking sausages and onions in "Le Train Du Memoir," a performance by Li Chiao-Ping and Douglas Rosenberg.



Dancing with apples in "Romeo and Juliet/Adam and Eve," a performance by Li Chiao-Ping and Douglas Rosenberg.



On opening a jar of pickles by Chiao-Ping, Doug, LB and Michael, the first thing that you notice is the powerful bouquet, a heady, intoxicating blend of garlic and dill. The color and texture are slightly deceptive; these marinated cucumbers look crisp and surprisingly bright green, like half-dones. But biting into one, you're penetrated by its full-bodied, lingering sourness. It's crunchy, garlicky, piquant, succulent, and savory, with slight peppery notes. There's an old Russian idiom: "Molodets, kak solyonnyi ogurets (Right on, like a salted cucumber)." After tasting one of these, you feel like cheering, "Molodets! Molodets! Molodets!"

Sally Banes,  
Performance Critic

The preparation of food and the act of gathering and sitting down together to eat a meal are very important to most Chinese people, especially among immigrant families. While much emphasis and reward is placed on the successful and smooth assimilation of the immigrant son or daughter into the dominant (American) culture, a sense of crisis and anxiety arises in the family (especially between the older and younger generations) from the approaching loss and/or lack of preservation of cultural practices and rituals which have long been passed from generation to generation. Who will preserve our traditions? Who will honor our ancestors?



The immigrant family, the keeper of the culture, is like a tree, which is transplanted to new soil, sun, and neighbors. The tree learns to adapt to its new home. It is impossible for the new environment to provide the same kind of nourishment and support as the homeland; in comparison, in later years, the transplanted tree will look distinctively different from the homeland tree. In other words, the family (tree) is now uprooted or dislocated from the original (familiar) land and no longer can physically and contemporaneously interact with the also-changing cultural climate of home and, therefore, will continue on a different cultural trajectory than his/her friends. The immigrant family, then, carries a kind of frozen sense/memory of their culture and through their rituals, such as cooking and eating, perform/preserve some of their traditions. My mother and father always fill their suitcases with their own food when they come to visit. They insist that they never feel full if they don't have rice everyday and so, consequently, we rarely take them out to eat anything other than Chinese food (and it is usually unsatisfactory on a number of counts save the fact that they did at least have their bowl of rice). The notion of feeling full is an interesting one in that it is really not a matter of quantity or plentifulness at all; rather, here it is quite definitely about an emotional comfort which the rice provides and a feeling of security or safety. My parents participate in perpetuating cultural history and folk ethics and traditions through such mythology: "Eat every grain of rice in your bowl if you wish to bear many children" and "Burning your rice is bad luck." The preparation and consumption of special foods, such as Chinese tamales known as "doong" and mooncakes are an essential part of celebrating our cultural heritage and commemorating special occasions/seasons. The rituals would feel incomplete without these deliciously, elaborately-filled leaf packages and cakes made of paste and thousand-year eggs. Food and story seem to go hand-in-hand and participating in the making of pickles has been a way for me to continue to perform within a tradition and, in fact, create a new one. Laurie Beth Clark, Li Chiao-Ping, Michael Peterson, and Douglas Rosenberg have been meeting annually for the past 4 years to make pickles. The recipe descends from Douglas' Jewish paternal grandmother and the group has gone through varying stages of success with our pickles trying to adapt the recipe. In recent years the pickles have been devoured voraciously by connoisseurs of garlic dills, many who recall, with some sense of nostalgia, some far-away place or time where they had a similar gratifyingly sour crunch. There are several steps to the pickle-making process: combing the Madison Farmer's Market in early fall for right-sized fresh cukes, dill, and garlic, trying other markets as needed...making the purchases of the above as well as other spices...meeting at Laurie Beth and Michael's industrial kitchen with crocks in hand...prepping the ingredients: washing/scrubbing the cucumbers (Michael's job usually), peeling/chopping garlic and chopping dill (Laurie Beth and Chiao-Ping's jobs), and boiling the water and otherwise directing (Douglas' job)...assembling the ingredients in the crocks...storing the crocks...waiting...skimming brine...smelling...looking. At this stage, the only thing to do really is to wait. We must sit back and wait for the magic to happen, trusting that the proper steps have been taken in the proper order and under the proper circumstances. As a choreographer and a dancer, I know this feeling of waiting. However, in contrast to the delightful object which results from the pickling, a thing whose reality and raison d'être is indisputable, my work results in no tangible product; its temporality is illusive and often questioned. In both cases, the creative process is mysterious, yet the pickling results in something which is fulfilling in a much more obvious way. It is no wonder that our annual pickling ritual offers me such comfort.

enough to be the recipient of a jar of fresh garlic pickles, hand-canned by LB Clark, Li Chiao-Ping, Michael Peterson and Douglas Rosenberg, make sure to savor the moment. These pickles, rare among their kind, possess an equal measure of the two characteristics paramount in pickledness. First, they are sour—almost eye-searingly so. An unmitigated sour that dissipates into a peppery garlic wallop. Secondly, they've got crunch, each foot-long bite like crisp iceberg lettuce, Brassica napus, or a number of other vegetables. They're the kind of pickles bracing enough to cut through even the richest melting fat of hot pastрами. Any true delicatessen would be proud.

Baking bread in "Expert Opinion A Real Time Record," a performance by Michael Peterson.



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Melissa Clark,  
Food Writer

What if a Critic... Asking what a performance critic might make of our annual pickling activity is a version of the old rhetorical distancing device about the anthropologist from Mars. A visit to the world of food by a critic from the world of performance... Pickles are inherently comic, Rabelaisian in their shape, in their deadpan comic timing, and in the "grotesque swing, which brings together heaven and earth" produced by the bacterial digestive processes properly aligned with the "material bodily lower stratum" (Bakhtin 1984: 371). This is a role-structured improvisation, in which each participant deviates freely from an assigned part (Doug as true Jew, keeper of the text and chief ironist; LB as manager-producer and the straight man to Doug's ethnic shtick; Chiao-Ping as slyly naive enthusiast and figurative youngest child at the Seder; Michael as goy mascot and stupidly stubborn bear of likeable characters overcome their personal lives to catch the crook, defend the innocent, save the patient, pickle the pickle? Pickling has a performative politics (in common with baking, home-brewing, and vinegar making, but quite different from more routine kitchen practice) which activates the non-human participants so that objects become subjects, transforming the ingredients from props to protagonists. [Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indiana UP.]



The jaw is empty!

The act of "pickling" or "putting up" cucumbers or other foods is an act of preservation both metaphorically and otherwise. Pickling preserves the life of a particular food long after it may have spoiled or literally disappeared. One might say that in a sense, pickling is a sort of mummification process that preserves the corpus of the original, while preserving the performative (ritual of mummification itself). In other words the act of pickling/mummifying is simultaneously a memorial to tradition and a traditional memorial. The performative act of pickling preserves a tradition as it produces an artifact. In the eastern European tradition, pickling is a community practice and in numerous other cultures/communities pickling/putting up is a ritual that is practiced in small groups annually, at the same time each year based on the availability of freshly harvested food products. As a "cultural" Jew, that is one who relies on the more physical aspects of Jewish life to preserve and identify myself as Jewish, the preservation of culture through the preservation (pickling) of food is/has become a symbolic link to my personal history as a diasporic Jew. As "Jewishness" is defined as a matrarchy, the traditions of Jewish cooking and food preparation in the home are matrarchal as well. The pickles we make each year are a product of the memory of my mother as inspired by my father's mother. As such, we have broken with the matrarchy and reconceived a new community whose practices memorialize and extend the matrarchy of pickling/preserving, while honoring the original source. In our pickling community, two are Jewish while our partners are not, and none of us have children. We have chosen to adopt the practice of pickling and subsequently to share the products of our work among our larger communities! The process of coming together each year has become, for me, a time of personal reflection (even as I am surrounded by the group) accorded through the repetitive, performative nature of the work necessary to produce the pickles. Additionally, the leap of faith required in the few days subsequent to the preparation of the pickles, during which the brine ferments, is in a sense a period in which the community has put its faith in the vagaries of alchemy. The pleasure of consuming the pickles is equal to and reflective of the pleasure of the labor and the process of creating them. As the pickles are removed from the crocks and placed in jars, each jar becomes in a sense, a monument to the history and lineage of the recipe, to matrarchal Jewish life, to the community that has chosen to perpetuate these histories. As public as community projects, the pickles are given with a recognition of these histories, effectively perpetuating the narrative and textual resonance that often states these foods from mechanically reproduced or purchased foods. These preserved foods carry within them the inscription of tradition, of history, and of the performance of matrarchy.

*We've been enjoying the pickles and tamalacos (what a job you did. We're going to eat a few more your pickles to the jar - You assure me to tell you what I thought. I know that's a personal choice.*



**The Efficacy-Entertaining Braid**

To clarify the relationship of theatre and ritual, Richard Schechner develops the notion of an "efficacy-entertainment braid" and asserts that "the basic polarity is between efficacy and entertainment, not between ritual and theatre" (Schechner, 1988: 120). This phrase acquires a whole new utility when applied to the relation between cooking and performance, especially with the substitution of "entertaining" for entertainment. A performance may involve more or less efficacy and more or less entertainment, when studying a food event we can observe a similar continuum ranging from plain nourishment to entertaining (Entertaining) performance, according to the degree of efficacy; perhaps, for example, "On Blues" (Bedolna) (Kastner) might work up an issue "On Entertaining." Ask a cook, not "are you an artist?" or "is this a performance?" but "how is this about feeding and how is it about hosting?" Of course, the efficacy in cooking is not confined to nutrition: in what ways are efficacy and entertaining braided when Chiao-Ping or I make chila-lar? (Schechner, Richard (1988) Performance Theory. New York: Routledge.)



Making cookies in "Not Necessarily," a performance by Laurie Beth Clark.



**What are the Components of a Beautiful Process?**

◆ a marking of the event as special, in some way outside of daily life, and a casual attitude toward any given moment in the process, emphasizing its everyday-ness ◆ connection to a tradition, a prior practice (in this case "old world" or "back home") and structured repetition which allows a new "way" or tradition to be established ◆ melodramatic commitment to the outcomes, and ongoing reflexive commentary, a clear logic in the steps of the process, and a pervasive mystery (like the importance of not knowing too much about pickle chemistry).



*my love always Mom*



**Pickle Reflection**

Making pickles may initially look like a common routine birthed to celebrate modernity's stringent platform of rationality and order, but like Dutch artist-cum-butcher Joep Van Lieshout's hams, sausages, trotters, meatballs and black puddings, cucumbers packed into sterilized canning jars are alight on style but rich in self-reliance and self-provision. Rejecting an academic analysis of iconicity, home-made pickles cannot be assessed solely on their sensory pleasures. Their criticality and value lays in their intimate system of exchange.

On December 9, 1998, I was a proud and honored recipient of one jar of salty Jewish-style New York pickles by Madison artists Laurie Beth Clark, Li Chiao-Ping, Michael Peterson and Douglas Rosenberg. Following Clark's instructions to put them in the refrigerator when I got home, I have yet to break its airtight seal. Making their way to the back of the top shelf with the unidentifiable foil-wrapped leftovers, I still get a good look at them every time I pull out the gallon of milk. Lately I have noticed an opaque white cloud forming around the bottom of the jar.

Must I consume these pickles to fulfill some sort of artist project or condiment manifest destiny? Can they join the ranks of fruitcake in the bottom of the trash bin or should they simply take up permanent residence next to my brother-in-law's home-made horse radish?

The act of giving away an elaborately processed garnish, that in the end is as prosaic as table salt, speaks to the perversities and contradictions inherent in our contemporary state of social decorum. If the obligatory dining accompaniment is executed with the heart-felt, time-honored traditions passed down by old-world ancestors, then its value as a gift is time and history. However, if bestowing another with a 18oz jar of mass produced Milwaukee brand kosher, the intent of exchange is likely to be a comical gesture, a gag in keeping with Duchamp's bottled air or hidden sound.

Therapy and catharsis are also an essential by-product of the briny low-cal staple. When juxtaposing pickle aesthetics-color, taste, and texture-with reconciling our desire for resourcefulness and self-determination, the later will always out-prioritize the appetite. Architect Ren Koolhaas wrote: "If there exists a method in our work, it is the method of a systematic idealization of spontaneous representation of the existing, a theoretical embodiment which, by retrospective and ideological advances, seizes even the mediocre."

Finally, the act of preserving food still reasserts a sense of order and power in the everyday. Dictated by a seasonal clock, ritual preparation and aesthetic indifference, putting up pickles or making sausage provides Clark/Li/Peterson/Rosenberg and Van Lieshout with a practical liberty that even artmaking cannot fulfill.

Richard Grabner, artist and critic

11 lbs.  
11 lbs.  
12 lbs.  
13 lbs.  
14 lbs.  
15 lbs.  
15 lbs.  
15 lbs.  
0 - 1,000 ft.  
At 2,001 - 4,000 ft.  
At 4,001 - 6,000 ft.  
At 6,001 - 8,000 ft.  
At 8,001 - 10,000 ft.

utensil down ins  
BOIL!  
AIR

correct incrementall

# New Critical Writing

## Performance Research Annual Essay Competition

Submission deadline: 1st September 1999, for publication in Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 2000.

The aim of the competition is to foster original essay writing by emerging artists, scholars and critics and is open to anyone whose work has not been previously published in a peer reviewed journal. The work of all participants will first be read by readers drawn from the Editorial Board of 'Performance Research' and each person will then be assigned an editor for feedback and revision. After revision the essays will be considered for publication. While only one will be published we hope that the process of working with an experienced reader/writer as editor will be useful in itself. PR is also currently looking at alternate forms of publication for all revised submissions, in conjunction other organisations promoting new critical writing.

## Forthcoming Issues



### On Line

Summer 1999

Emerging digital media, information and communications technologies are changing the ways in which we understand and experience time and space, place and body. These developments challenge us to redefine existing strategies and forms of performance, and to create fresh approaches and alternative environments for performance making and composition. *On Line* will explore these changing conditions as they relate to performance practice and discourse. The editors invite materials from individuals and groups involved in exploring territories where emerging technologies and performance overlap and intersect, as well as excavations of the histories of performance and technology.



### On Silence

Winter 1999

The greatest irony about silence is that there has been so much said about it. In fact, in this noisiest of centuries, silence has emerged as one of the richest areas of critical enquiry and most powerful elements of artistic expression. For the final issue of this millennium, Performance Research will look at its nature, uses and meaning across the fields of performance. We wish to explore silence as metaphor, as practice, as absence, emptiness and experience, political silence and silencing, musical and visual silence, and the place of silence in the history of the avant garde, as well as linguistic and philosophical approaches to silence.



### Open Issue

Spring 2000

Open Issue - Vol 5 no.1 opens the fifth year of publication for Performance Research, and focuses on furthering the conversations with scholars and artists which have developed over the first half-decade of our existence. As well as including reflections on the state of play in the worlds of performance practice, theory and criticism the editors intend to open new subjects and to initiate new formats for publication. Proposals, interviews, performance texts, letters and responses to the ideas generated in PR since 1996 are welcomed and encouraged.

# Editorial

This issue of *Performance Research* arises from and responds to a conference/festival organised by the Centre for Performance Research in January 1994. *Performance, Food and Cookery* was part of the CPR's *Points of Contact* series and explored the piquant analogies and correlations between the processes in cooking and performance. However, not a single paper presented at *Points of Contact #5: Performance, Food and Cookery* is reproduced here, and only a few contributors to this issue actually attended the conference. The themes explored at that event and the connections made between ideas, people, processes and cuisines have continued to inspire me, nourish me and, at times, consume me with a passion that can only be described as a 'food disorder'. I am obsessed with food and performance, food in performance and food as performance: with the process of cooking and making theatre; with presentations at the table and on the stage; with the creative fervour of the kitchen and the rehearsal room, and with the very material of food as a medium for performance and as a model of performance: multisensory, processural and communal.

While not reproducing any of the extraordinary papers, presentations and demonstrations made at the 1994 conference, I am, however, deeply indebted to it and the many artists and scholars who presented at it. I am most especially grateful to my close collaborators, Judie Christie, Scott deLahunta and Celia Webb, who helped me stage what was an enormously challenging event and who have subsequently kept the dialogues and conversations around the themes alive and 'cooking'.

It was at this conference that we first encountered Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, who we had invited to deliver the keynote speech – *Along the Alimentary Canal*. Given her grasp and perspective on the connection between food and performance it

seemed entirely appropriate to invite her to deliver what is, in effect, a keynote essay to this issue of *Performance Research*. Such was the enthusiasm with which she took up this task, and so sustained the dialogues we had along the way, that a vast opus was produced, a severely edited form of which we can only present here (still making it the longest essay to appear in *Performance Research* to date).

I am particularly pleased to include material from a 'young' generation of British scholars and practitioners – Emma Giovan, Dan Rebellato, Adrian Kear and Helen Iball – whose playful integration of film theory, critical theory, medical history, food writing, popular culture, and unpopular cuisine make a sustainable contribution to this issue. So too do the pages 'prepared' by artists and chefs. Unable to rise to the challenge made by the team who have created the *On Pickling* pages – which were to include 'scratch and sniff' cards and even taste swatches in their section – our artists' pages in this issue are mainly limited to illustrations of food events or cooking processes. The work of celebrated Belgian Chef, Peter de Bie, and his carousel kitchen is profiled in the photo essay of *Peep and Eat*. The initial proposal for *A Temperate Menu* by the extraordinary Spanish performance artist and gastronomic consultant Alicia Rios is included together with photographs of subsequent restagings and variations on the theme. John Fox, who, with partner Sue Fox and Welfare State International, has created so many celebratory performance events integrating food and had such a major influence on British theatre since the mid 1960s, has created special wood-block prints for this issue. His essay has been further illustrated (thanks to Simon Josebury) with drawings, sketches and recipes from the Welfare State archive.

Within the project of Performance Studies, there