Since the turn of the century, performance studies has emerged as an increasingly vibrant discipline. Its concerns – embodiment, ethical research, and social change – are held in common with many other fields, but a unique combination of methods and applications is used in exploration of this field. Bridging live art practices – theatre, performance art, and dance – with technological media, and social sciences with humanities, it is truly hybrid and experimental in its techniques. This Companion brings together specially commissioned essays from leading scholars who reflect on their own trajectory into performance studies and the possibilities this offers to representations of identity, self-and-other, and communities. Theories that have been absorbed into the field are applied to compelling topics in current academic, artistic, and community settings. The collection is designed to reflect the diversity of outlooks and provide a guide for students as well as scholars seeking a perspective on research trends.

Tracy C. Davis specializes in performance theory, theatre historiography, and research methodology. Her most recent books are Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense (2007), The Performing Society: Nineteenth-Century Theatre’s History (with Peter Holland, 2007), and Considering Calamity: Methods for Performance Research (with Linda Ben-Zvi, 2007). She is currently Director of the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama at Northwestern University and President of the American Society for Theatre Research.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO PERFORMANCE STUDIES

EDITED BY
TRACY C. DAVIS
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**Introduction: the pirouette, detour, revolution, deflection, deviation, tack, and yaw of the performative turn**

**Tracy C. Davis**

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At its best, teaching is a mutual process. Teaching about performance almost invariably draws attention to the reciprocity of communication and mutuality of expression that show how teaching and learning are two related kinds of performance among a myriad of performative circumstances. When performance is the topic, practice cannot help but show theories in action, and even performative malfunctions, mishaps, and misfires produce more grist for the mill. It is humbling to experience how the feedback loop is social as well as internal; through this process selves are made, and communities reified, in the act of performing. I have found this to be as true of locally organized further education classes as of scholarly conferences. In the latter case I have been enthralled by insights offered by all the contributors to this volume. Bringing their perspectives together allows me to highlight what I currently find most compelling about performance studies, both as a scholarly field and as insight into lived practice. These essays indicate what I believe will be our collective directions for many years to come.

Not so much a culmination as a record of work in progress, this book also represents the collective exchange between myself, colleagues, and a generation of students at Northwestern University, where I have had the pleasure, and privilege, of advising in the Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama and the Department of Performance Studies since 1991. For many of those years, our lodestar was Dwight Conquergood. This book is testament to his ongoing legacy: may our efforts always be epitomized by Dwight’s deep investments in ethical reciprocity, social justice, and the transformative power of imagination expressed through performance.

Special thanks to Victoria Cooper, who inspired this project, and so many others at Cambridge University Press.