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of Byzantine Studies

**PERFORMANCE
INDICATORS**

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Institute of Byzantine Studies
Queen's University Belfast

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Byzantium has been characterised as a society without a drama. While it is not absolutely certain that this is true, further investigation reveals that performance and spectacle suffused Byzantine civilisation. This symposium will investigate the case for Byzantine drama, in theatres, in theatra, in church festivals, in the use of dialogue, but it will also explore other loci of drama in Byzantium: the theatre of the liturgy, ‘we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth’, the role of ceremony, maintaining the empire ‘in due proportion and order’, and the spectacle of street, hippodrome and tzikanisterion. Polo games, grand speeches, public executions, arriving embassies, departing hunting-parties, triumphs, even tournaments are all part of our concern.



We shall concentrate not only on the Great Church and the Great Palace: other parts of the empire and the great non-imperial houses are also important, and the nature of orality and performativity in Byzantium, whether it is seen in ideology, gender or in the performance of the self. We shall investigate a literature in its performance context, but show also how text combined with architecture and art and music and incense combined to create an effect which was multisensual as well as multimedia. How was it performed and how do we know that are equally important questions, and the answers will lead us not just to reconstitute the reception experience of Byzantine literature but to understand a defining aspect of Byzantium as a whole. The symposium will take place over three days in April 2005 with lectures, communications, exhibitions, receptions, a student competition – and performances.