



Evolution, Cognition, and Performance

Bruce McConachie



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Culture and cognition work together dynamically every time a spectator interprets meaning during a performance. In this study, Bruce McConachie examines the biocultural basis of all performance, from its origins and the cognitive processes that facilitate it, to what keeps us coming back for more. To effect this major reorientation, McConachie works within the scientific paradigm of enaction, which explains all human activities, including performances, as the interactions of mental, bodily, and ecological networks. He goes on to use our biocultural proclivity for altruism, as revealed in performance, to explore our species' gradual ethical progress on such matters as the changing norms of religious sacrifice, slavery, and LGBT rights. Along the way, the book engages with a wide range of performances, including Richard Pryor's stand-up, the film Titanic, aerialist performances, American football, and the stage and film versions of A Streetcar Named Desire.

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