

Wednesday 3 – Saturday 6 September 2025
Hosted by Guildhall School of Music & Drama

EASTAP Annual Conference 2025: Decentre | Distribute | Democratise

GUILDHALL
SCHOOL

EASTAP
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION
FOR THE STUDY OF
THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE

Contents

EASTAP Conference schedule	4
Pre-conference	
Tuesday 2 September 2025	4
Day 1	
Wednesday 3 September 2025	5
Day 2	
Thursday 4 September 2025	7
Day 3	
Friday 5 September 2025	10
Day 4	
Saturday 6 September 2025	14
Abstracts & biographies	18
Paper presentations	18
Performances	70
Long tables, Hackathons, Interventions	72
Keynote Chairs & Round Table Participants	75
EASTAP Executive Committee	77
Emerging Scholars Forum	
Convenors	78
Conference Steering Committee	79

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Welcome

The EASTAP Bureau is delighted to welcome you to the 8th EASTAP Conference. We are thrilled that so many known and new voices have responded to the topic “Decentre – Distribute – Democratised”. As a European organisation, we are excited to bring our annual conference to the UK with its contested relationship with Europe, politically, and often aesthetically. We particularly welcome this year’s EASTAP Associate Artists Dead Centre (Ben Kidd and Bush Moukarzel), two Irish artists well versed in European theatre, on which they have developed their special take. And EASTAP Associate Scholar André de Quadros, a truly global artist and activist who will reflect how to perform resistance to warfare states, while still keeping up hope. Keynotes from Campbell X and Liz Tomlin will bring further important class and queer viewpoints into our debates.

Welcoming you here, we are mindful of those who did not have the opportunity to meet with us this week. Join us at our General Meeting on Friday and for the concluding plenary on Saturday to debate ideas how to further decenter, distribute and democratise EASTAP as well, not least by supporting friends and colleagues who keep up their work against threats and pressure. The situation is serious, as everywhere theatre, performance, dance, the Arts and Humanities suffer budget cuts. We have to consider, and defend, the future of our areas. Standing together as European organisation is more important than ever. And meeting here at Guildhall School of Music & Drama is therefore particularly significant at this juncture. We are grateful to Andy Lavender, Eliza Robey and their team for hosting our annual conference, and look forward to some exciting days together!

Peter M. Boenisch
President

Alix De Morant
Vice President

Asta Petrikienė
Treasurer

Rui Pina Coelho
Secretary

It’s my great pleasure to welcome you to Guildhall School of Music & Drama. We are honoured to host this year’s EASTAP Annual Conference.

As we suggested in the call for contributions, ‘As host city, London has been a questionable centre for (among other things) commerce, business and finance; empire and rubrics of imperialism; popular expression and democratic governance; and theatre and the performing arts.’ (Of course, something similar might be said of cities in other places.) We’d like to give a shout-out for London – one of the most diverse cities in the world. In positive mode, a gathering of vibrant cultural scenes, and a place where cultural differences are lived and celebrated. A city where you can find yourself and be yourself. And, dare we say in an EASTAP context (since the majority of Londoners voted to remain in the European Union), a truly European city.

At Guildhall School we embrace internationalism from the perspective of both a conservatoire invested in training future generations of artists and practitioners, and a higher education institution engaged in research in our disciplines amid all the challenges that face the university and cultural sectors today. Guildhall, along with many places like it, works at the interface of practice and research, training and thinking, industry and academy.

Our location, then – both geographical and institutional – informed this year’s conference theme, Decentre | Distribute | Democratised. The conference considers how power and practices might be decentred, how (and among whom) performance is distributed, and how people’s voices count in the making and sharing of theatre, not least at a time of populist challenge and geopolitical refiguring. What does it mean, now, to think of decentring, distribution and democratising? There are many suggestions across the proceedings before us over the next few days.

The conference will surely be a place for friendship, fun, the sharing of passions, the building of bridges. Welcome to EASTAP 2025!

Andy Lavender
Provost & Vice Principal (Academic),
Guildhall School of Music & Drama
Conference Convenor

Pre-conference

Tuesday 2 September 2025

10am–5.30pm Conference registration open
Milton Court Box Office

11am–5.30pm **Disrupt Open Space** **Burning the parachute: Can community power survive the funding cycle?**
Studio Theatre, An Open Space event for anyone who works in the arts that cares about community,
Rehearsal Room 1 & power, and the politics of sustainable change.
Rehearsal Room 2 (Open Space ticketholders only)



Day 1

Wednesday 3 September 2025

9–11am	Registration & Tea/Coffee	
11–11.20am	Welcoming & Opening Milton Court Theatre	
11.20am–1pm	EASTAP Associate Academic Keynote & Opening Round Table Milton Court Theatre Chaired by Andy Lavender with Sean Gregory	<p>André de Quadros Performing Disobedience: Resistance and Radical Hope under the Warfare State</p> <p>Across Europe, the resurgence of militarized nationalism, securitized borders, and internal policing has entrenched the continent within a warfare logic – one that frames migrants, racialized communities, and dissenters as threats to be managed or erased. This presentation, <i>Performing Disobedience: Resistance and Radical Hope under the Warfare State</i>, explores how artists, activists, and cultural workers might use performance to confront these violent infrastructures. Acts of disobedience do more than resist, they rupture the everyday choreography of the warfare state, they dream forward, cultivating radical hope through aesthetic and communal practices that assert presence, solidarity, and survival. Drawing on examples from personal experience, this talk situates performance as a vital mode of political life. Engaging decolonial, abolitionist, and feminist theoretical lenses, I ask: How are our publics being reimagined through acts of refusal and care? What performative strategies challenge the continent's racialized regimes of exclusion? And how might these fugitive performances help us sense otherwise futures within – and beyond – the fortress?</p> <p>Dr André de Quadros is a professor of music at Boston University with affiliations in African, African American & Black Diaspora, American, Asian, Jewish, Latin American, Muslim studies, prison education, and Forced Migration. As a conductor, educator, artist, scholar, poet, and human rights activist, he has worked in over 40 countries in the most diverse settings including professional ensembles, projects with prisons, psychosocial rehabilitation, refugees, and victims of sexual violence, torture, and trauma. His work crosses race and mass incarceration (USA), peace-seeking (Israel-Palestine), forced migration (Latin America), public health (Latin America), and Islamic culture (South Asia). He has held distinguished visiting positions at the University of Cambridge and the University of Melbourne. He has several books, articles, book chapters, and choral editions to his credit in addition to hundreds of workshops, keynote presentations, and performances.</p> <p>Round table participants Professor Clare Finburgh-Delijani, Goldsmiths College, University of London Alia Alzougbi, Artistic Director & CEO, Shubbak Professor John Sloboda, Emeritus Professor, Guildhall School of Music & Drama</p>
1–2pm	Lunch	

2–3.15pm	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 1.1 Access and inclusion Chair: Timmy De Laet	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 1.2 Coloniality and decolonising Chair: Bilal Akar	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 1.3 Agency, identity and diversity: tensions and possibilities Chair: Jorge Loureiro Figueira	Gym Panel 1.4 Emerging Scholars Forum: Audience & accessibility Chair: Paula Magalhães
	<p>Fabienne Mathis Institutional opening processes – How can the sustainable and structural inclusion of people with disabilities in Swiss theatre organizations and audience succeed?</p> <p>Christina Banalopoulou Multilingual Soundscapes, Democratized Pedagogies: Theatre and Performance in Rum Minority Schools in Turkey</p>	<p>Clare Finburgh Delijani Democratizing and Decolonizing Theatre in Mid-Century France: The Théâtre noir de Paris (Paris Black Theatre) and The Théâtre de la langue française (Theatre of the French Language)</p> <p>Rebecca Infield Decentring Censorship in Colonial French Algeria: Hocine Bouzaher's 'Des Voix dans la casbah' (1960)</p> <p>Diana Damian Martin, Marilena Zaroulia European Entanglements: cultural politics and performance interventions</p>	<p>Annelies Van Assche Krumping the Opera: A Choreographic Coup or Baroque Spectacle 2.0?</p> <p>José Pedro Sousa On the Democratic Road: Queer Stages of the Portuguese Revolution</p> <p>Marlene Behrmann Interdisciplinary cross-cultural tandem match making in performing arts as an act of decentralizing</p>	<p>Elisa Smeraldo From body to sound: movement sonification and accessibility in performing arts</p> <p>Keiu Virro Abstract for Emerging Scholars Forum: Theatre for Diverse Young Audiences: Accessibility as Cultural Participation</p> <p>Tatiana Vakhatova Direct and Indirect Audience Engagement in Tiago Rodrigues' Performances/ the Emerging Scholars Forum</p> <p>Lisa Celsi Spectatorship and the Right to Appear: Exploring the Political Dimensions of Watching</p>
3.15–3.40pm	Break			
3.40–4.55pm	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 2.1 Democracy and theatre Chair: Pieter Verstraete	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 2.2 Political theatres and refigured communities Chair: Leonardo Mancini	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 2.3 Dance heritage, history and decolonial agency Chair: Sophie Proust	Gym Panel 2.4 Emerging Scholars Forum: Power in institutions Chair: Lisa Celsi
	<p>Christopher Balme What's democratic about theatre?</p> <p>David Calder Public Spaces and Public Spheres: Performance Infrastructure, Transnationalism, Democracy</p> <p>Reka Polonyi Democracy at play: making 'theatre as politics' (and not 'political theatre')</p>	<p>Madli Pesti Political Theatre – between manifestation of identity and entertainment</p> <p>Maíra Santos Scores in Flight: Democratizing Performance Creation in the Peripheries of Lisbon and São Paulo</p>	<p>Gustavo Vicente Decentering dance historiographies: nomadic poetics in Portugal</p> <p>Gisela Doria Dance as Decolonial Practice at Casa de Ensaio – A Reference from the Global South</p> <p>Timmy De Laet Distributing Dance Heritages: Authorship, Transmission, Values</p>	<p>Burcu Güney Yilmaz Cultural and Creative Infrastructure in Devolved Regions: What Do Universities Do?</p> <p>Ileana Gherghina Decentring actor training to include second language English actors: experimenting with Shakespearean sonnets</p> <p>Kristýna Ilek Dramaturgy and Healthy Creative Practices: Reimagining Working Conditions, Power Dynamics and Care</p> <p>Maria Sławińska A new need – definition of artistic ensemble</p>
5–6.30pm	Drinks Reception – Presentation of new journal issue & OJS platform Level 1 Foyer			

Day 2

Thursday 4 September 2025

9–9.30am		Registration			
9.30–10.45am	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 3.1 Pedagogies and practices for cultural renewal Chair: Lily Climenhaga	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 3.2 Democratisation and cultural practice Chair: Tomaz Toporisic	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 3.3 Protest and performance Chair: Aldo Milohnić	Gym Panel 3.4 Emerging Scholars Forum: Shifts in national dramaturgies Chair: Kristyna Ilek	
	Tara McAllister Viel Training Actors' Voices and 'Decolonizing' Voice Curriculum: Shifting Epistemologies	Dolores Beasley The Hamilton Effect? Democratisation in Casting in Commercial Theatre	Goran Petrovic Lotina Choreographies of Dissent: Student Movements and the Performance of Political Change in Belgrade	Theresa Spielmann Palliative Dramaturgy: Recentring Loss in Eco-Theatre (Emerging Scholars Forum)	
	Avra Sidiropoulou "Directing, Leadership, and the Ethics of Care"	Paula Magalhães Staging the process of democratic transformation: the revue theatre	Maria Konomi "I have no oxygen": Visual and Performative Elements in Anti-Corruption Demonstrations for Justice for Tempi Victims in Greece"	Matteo Tamborrino, Giuliana Piritu Decentring and Distributing in Piedmont Region: a Shift in Patterns	
	Jasper Delbecke Decentring Theatre in Flanders. The Case of the Royal Flemish Theatre and KVS <> Congo	Daniela Sacco Democratisation and Decentralisation: The Case of Indigenous Theatre in Quebec	Filippos (Philip) Hager Rehearsing nowness: acting on stage and in the streets during the 2023 protests in Greece	Ioanna Solidaki Reconsidering Decentring: The 'tiny' and the 'breach in time', for a dramaturgy of resistance.	
10.45–11.10am		Break			
11.10am–12.25pm	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 4.1 Dance and beyond Chair: Gisela Doria	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 4.2 Ecologies, sustainable practices and end times Chair: Amy Blier-Carruthers	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 4.3 Co-creation and social engagement Chair: Sophie Hope	Gym Panel 4.4 Emerging Scholars Forum: Exploring tradition Chair: Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh	
	Bilal Akar Decolonizing and Decentring the Archive: The Nebula of "Kurdish Princess" Leila Bederkhan	Silviu Dimitriu Decentering Theatrical Mimesis: Theatre as a Supplement	Ellen Wagstaff Working 'With': Decentring and Recentring the Practitioner in Applied Theatre Practice	Alessandro Tollari Democracy beyond language. Performing linguistic (un) learning otherwise	
	Vito Lentini The Dante Project. Wayne McGregor and "The Divine Comedy".	Eliane Beaufile Decenter Ecological Politics to Youth. The Danish Roleplay Active action	Sean Gregory, Heloisa Feichas Our spaces between: re-imagining creativity and re-wilding possibilities through connecting conversations.	Luca Domenico Artuso Haunting the Patriarchal Order: Aoki Ryōko's Artistic Practice and the Politics of Tradition in Japanese Nō Theatre	
	Raquel Madeira Platformisation of dance stages or the mirror of human connections in the post-digital era: 'Solas' (2023) by Candela Capitân.	Jonas Schnor Infinite Ends: From Posthuman to Posthumous Dramaturgies in the 21st Century	Elizabeth Fullerton Decentring the artist to make room for unheard voices: co-creation in the art practice of Rory Pilgrim	Alice Golisano The European Pavilion: An alternative method for the decentring of artistic practices outside national narratives	
12.25–12.40pm		Break			

12.40–1.30pm **Guildhall Associate
Academic Keynote**
Milton Court Theatre

Chaired by Trish Reid

Liz Tomlin

**Making Shoes: Working-Class Artists and the Ideological Imaginary
of Cultural Deficit**

This keynote will draw on my recent AHRC fellowship, exploring figurations of working-class subjects in UK theatre practice and policy. The decentring and democratisation of arts activity and redistribution of arts funding have been key priorities in Arts Council England's strategic vision over recent years, with the intended aim of increasing access to the arts to those from geographical areas that have historically been under-resourced both economically and culturally. While this is to be welcomed, the democratisation of access is not always matched by a democratisation of agency, or a decentring of who retains the reigns of the cultural narrative. In this paper I will trace three different manifestations of what I have termed the ideological imaginary of cultural deficit: the – sometimes – unconscious stigmatization of theatre artists self-defined, demographically categorized or otherwise-recognised as being of working-class origin. Rather than focusing on the right-wing stigmatization of the poor, an increasingly common target of contemporary theatre that locates class conflict as its theme, this paper will focus on the ways in which the mostly left-leaning/liberal industry of theatre and policy makers risk re-directing – sometimes unknowingly – the very same ideological imaginary of cultural deficit. Indeed, those who are themselves of working-class origin are not immune from the self-destructive power of this imaginary. I borrow the figure of the shoemaker from philosopher Jacques Ranciere, to illustrate how arts policy and theatre practice is too often drawn into the trap of reducing the cultural potential of the working-class artist to the ability to write or stage their authentic autobiography, rather than permitting them the artistic expertise to make whatever kind of work they want. Like Ranciere's shoemaker, restricted by the history of philosophy to only making shoes in order to leave the space for art and contemplation to the philosophers, the working-class artist risks being valued only for one thing: their working-class lived experience, leaving the space for all other models of performance for artists from more privileged backgrounds to occupy. To this end I will examine differing approaches to what might be termed theatres of real people, autobiographical, or autofictional, performance and processes of community participation. The keynote will explore how working-class theatre artists can be located in each model as a shoemaker whose only value is the cultural and social capital of their classed lived experience, rather than their skills as an artist. I will also examine models of these practices which highlight this risk and undertake strategies to counter the ideological imaginary of cultural deficit in their work. In conclusion, I will note how the ideological severance of the 'art' from the 'working-class artist' is now becoming endemic in public arts policy in the UK, holding great risk to both the diversity and quality of theatre practice in the future, and to the potential for those from working-class backgrounds to become artists in the first place.

Liz Tomlin is Professor of Theatre and Performance at the University of Glasgow. Her publications include *Acts and Apparitions: Discourses on the Real in Performance Practice and Theory* (2013) and *Political Dramaturgies and Theatre Spectatorship: Provocations for Change* (2019). She has recently focused on class analysis of theatre leading an AHRC Research Network on class discrimination in the British theatre industry (2018–19) and holding an AHRC Research, Development and Engagement Fellowship (2022–24) (Figurations of working-class subjects in UK theatre practice and policy). Open access publications resulting from this work include a co-edited special issue, *Artist Development: Access, Diversity, Exclusion* (*Studies in Theatre and Performance* 40:3, 2020) and *Staging Class Conflict in the UK* (2025). She formerly directed theatre productions with communities and schools in South Yorkshire, UK (1995–2010), and was playwright and co-director with Point Blank Theatre (1999–2009), with selected playtexts published in *Point Blank: Performance Texts and Critical Essays* (2007).

1.30–2.30pm Lunch

ESF lunch session: Working in intercultural academic environments
Gym

2.30–3.45pm	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 5.1 Women, leadership, change Chair: Avra Sidiropoulou	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 5.2 The spectator (embodied, interpellated and decentred) Chair: Leslie Deere	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 5.3 Decentring practices and paradigms Chair: Martina Groß	Gym Panel 5.4 Emerging Scholars Forum: National perspectives Chair: Keiu Virro
	Ann-Christine Simke Decentring Theatre Production – Intersectional Feminist Theatre Making in Scotland’s Regions	Cláudia Madeira, Raquel Rodrigues Madeira Where is “The Centre of the World”? The spectator beyond the centre and periphery in the performances of Ana Borralho and João Galante.	Aldo Milohnić Decentring, Distributing and Democratising in the Theatre of Milo Rau	Melanie Fieldseth Gestures of Decentering at a National Dance Company
	Sophie Proust What new modes of governance with women at the head of theatres?	Mahsa Sheydani Hamlet the Spectator: How a Canonical Text’s vision Multiplies Through Dissolution	Sophie Hope From impacting to de-centring? Exploring paradigm shifts at Guildhall School	Varvara Sklez Fragile, Elusive, Sensitive: Positionality of Contemporary Russian Migrant Artists
	Marta Ribeiro Female Voices, Censored Stages: Resilience and Cultural Resistance in Portugal during the Marcelist Spring	Ljubi Matic Taking in a Gift-Back Performance	Stefania Lodi Rizzini Decentering Perspectives Through Eccentric Bodies	Rita Agatina Di Leo Site of Resistance – A temporal and artistic struggle shared?
				Giulia Sala Barong and Tourism in Bali: decentralizing tradition from ritual to stage
3.45–4pm Break				
4–5.45pm	TV Studio VR Intervention	Rehearsal Room 1 Hackathon / Promptjam	Rehearsal Room 2 Long table	
	4–5pm Evi Stamatiou Ethnoacting in VR for Resilience in Acting Students	4.15–5.45pm Guildhall Production Studio Deepfaking Dramaturgy	4.15–5.45pm Phoebe Patey-Ferguson, with Joe Parslow, Ben Buratta, Stephen Farrier Long Table D-Liberations: how Queer Nightlife Performance Decentres, Democratises, Distributes and Destroys	
7.45pm onwards	Cow/Deer (Theatre ticketholders only) Royal Court Theatre			

Day 3

Friday 5 September 2025

9–9.30am		Registration			
9.30–10.45am	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 6.1 Migration, refugees and (counter-) hegemony Chair: Mary Mazzilli	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 6.2 Recentralise and radicalise Chair: Sean Gregory	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 6.3 Bodily co-presence and physical performance at the boundaries Chair: Cláudia Madeira	Gym Panel 6.4 Emerging Scholars Forum: Revolution and resistance Chair: David Calder	Meeting Room 1 EASTAP ExComm Meeting
	Alejandro Postigo Miss Brexit: Decentring Linguistic Hegemony in UK Theatre	Jorge Loureiro Figueira The revolution mixtapes: precariat theatre plays in Portugal since 2010	Tomasz Wiśniewski Complicité: Peripheries and Margins	Angelina Demarchi-Roussel “Opera and Street Art: Reclaiming an Art Form and New Creative Challenges. A Case Study of the Theatrical Brass Band Les Grooms”	8.30–10.45am (EASTAP ExComm members only)
	Małgorzata Budzowska Performing art as a counter-hegemonic practise. Institute of Performing Law by Michał Zadara	Tomaz Toporišič Decentring and distributing the positions of power in contemporary performing arts	Sara Fontana Archaeology of gesture and democracy of the body in the works of Virgilio Sieni	Eva-Liisa Linder The Wind of Change: Theatre at the Forefront of the Democratic Turn during Estonian Transition	
	Emma Cox Forensic Arts, Counter Forensics, Forensic Activism: The Para-Jurisdictions of European Asylum	Martin Bernátek Radicalizing Culture: Avant-Garde Theatre’s Engagement with the Working Class	Esther Criado Valladares Crisis and Catalan Live Art. Decentralizing the subject, reimagining performance: a case study of “El Conde de Torrefiel”.	Marianna Lucarini Who Distributes What, and for Whom? The Paradox of Cultural Democratization in Occupied Spaces	
10.45–11.10am Break					

11.10am– 12.25pm	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 7.1 The non-centre of Europe and national identities Chair: Lily Climenhaga	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 7.2 Decentring national centrings Chair: Christopher Balme	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 7.3 Community situations Chair: Sara Fontana	Gym Panel 7.4 Emerging Scholars Forum: Performance and (hyper)media Chair: Stefania Lodi Rizzini
	Asta Petrikienė Visions from Peripheral Europe: Lithuanian Presence in the International Theatre Landscape Mary Mazzilli Decentring and decolonising theatre in post-Brexit neo-nationalist Britain	Katerina Karra Policy Efforts in Advancing Regional Theatre in Greece Margherita Laera Decentring the Primacy of English: Theatre (in) Translation and its Barriers Martina Groß Decentring theatre and performance history –	Mark Love-Smith Radical openness in large-scale community theatre-making Leonardo Mancini Dante ‘round the corner’: traces and perspectives of an itinerant theatrical laboratory (Turin 2024)	Andrea Malosio Video as a fairy-tale element in the theatre of the Italian company Fanny & Alexander Federica Patti History of OTONI. Online digital performance from mid Nineties till tomorrow Grethe Melby Places - or “topoi” - in theatre criticism Tiago Ivo Cruz Decentralisation: how Portuguese independent theatre groups aimed to foster democracy after the Carnation Revolution and its institutional consequences

12.25–12.40pm Break



Presenter at Performance Studies Conference (10-13 July 2025).

12.40–1.30pm	Plenary session: EASTAP Associate Artist Keynote Milton Court Theatre Chaired by Orla O'Loughlin	Ben Kidd and Bush Moukarzel In conversation: Dead Centre Dead Centre was founded in Dublin in 2012. Their work has toured around the world, including to the Young Vic in London, Schaubühne, Berlin, Dramaten, Stockholm, Brisbane Festival, Hong Kong Festival, Théâtre de Liège, Seoul Performing Arts Festival and BAM, New York. Their projects include <i>LIPPT</i> (2013) <i>Chekhov's First Play</i> (2015) <i>Hamnet</i> (2017) <i>Beckett's Room</i> (2019), <i>To Be a Machine (Version 1.0)</i> (created in 2020 during the pandemic, streamed live to audiences around the world) <i>Good Sex</i> (2022), <i>To Be a Machine (Version 2.0)</i> (2023) and <i>Illness as Metaphor</i> , adapted from the book by Susan Sontag (2024). They have created new work in the German language at Schaubühne, Berlin (<i>Shakespeare's Last Play</i>), Schauspiel Stuttgart, (<i>The Education of Rudolf Steiner</i>), and have made four projects at Burgtheater, Vienna (<i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> , <i>Die Maschine in Mir</i> , <i>Alles, was der Fall ist</i> , <i>Katbarsis</i>). They have made work at Göteborgs Stadsteater (<i>The Silence</i>) and they have directed opera at Ruhrtriennale (<i>Bäblamms Fest</i>), Deutsche Oper, Berlin (<i>Teorema</i> , <i>LASH: Acts of Love</i>) and Hamburg Staatsoper (<i>Die dunkle Seite des Mondes</i>). Orla O'Loughlin Orla's work has won awards including The James Menzies Kitchen Directors Award, Herald Angels, Fringe Firsts, Critics Award for Theatre in Scotland, Lustrum and Stage Awards. Her recent production of <i>The Time Machine</i> at the Park Theatre, was nominated for an Olivier Award in the 'outstanding achievement in an affiliate theatre' category. Directing includes: <i>Lear</i> (Raw Material, in association with Singapore International Festival/ National Theatre of Scotland); <i>V.L</i> (F.M.P at The Roundabout), <i>James V: Katherine</i> , (Raw Material/ Capital Theatres Edinburgh); <i>Enough of Him</i> (National Theatre of Scotland); <i>How Much is your Iron?</i> (Young Vic); <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> (West Yorkshire Playhouse/ UK Tour/ West End); <i>Kebab</i> (Dublin International Theatre Festival/ Royal Court); <i>For Once</i> (Hampstead Theatre/ UK Tour); <i>The Fire Raisers</i> (BAC); <i>Black Comedy</i> , <i>Blithe Spirit</i> , <i>Relatively Speaking</i> (Watermill Theatre); <i>A Respectable Widow Takes to Vulgarly and Clean</i> (Oran Mor/ 59E59, New York). As former Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre, directing credits include <i>Mouthpiece</i> , <i>What Girls are Made of</i> , <i>Swallow</i> , <i>Ciara</i> , <i>Spoiling</i> , <i>Meet Me at Dawn</i> and <i>Locker Room Talk</i> . Listed in the Observer as one of the top fifty Cultural Leaders in the UK, Orla is a Vice Principal at Guildhall where she was conferred the title Professor in recognition of her 'outstanding contribution to the advancement of her discipline'.
1.30–2.30pm	Lunch	ESF lunch session: Grant writing Gym

2.30-4.45pm	EASTAP AGM Milton Court Theatre		
4.45-5pm	Break		
5-6.45pm	Studio Theatre Performances Chair: Emily Orley	Rehearsal Room 1 Hackathon	Rehearsal Room 2 Long table
	Moa Sahlin, Funmi Adewole Elliott One bucket of PEACE: A Site-Specific Performance Lecture at the Edge	5.15-6.45pm Open for curation in real time	5.15-6.45pm Disrupt and De-Centre Disrupting and de-centring in the arts institution
	Alexandra Oliveira Fragments of a Collective Look		
	Christina Schmutz Opening Up a Sliding Door		
	Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh Critical Conversations with Medea and Carmen		
7.30pm onwards	Deaf Republic (Theatre ticketholders only) Royal Court Theatre		

Day 4

Saturday 6 September 2025

9–9.30am	Registration	
9.30–10.45am	<div><div>Rehearsal Room 1</div><div>Panel 8.1 The anthropocene, climate crisis, theatre and performance</div><div>Chair: Martin Bernátek</div></div>	<div><div>Rehearsal Room 2</div><div>Panel 8.2 Action, curation, democracy</div><div>Chair: Filippos (Philip) Hager</div></div>
	<div><div>Fernanda Raquel</div><div>An animist turn in the performing arts – artistic experiences to rethink the anthropocene</div></div>	<div><div>Eleni Gini</div><div>Heterotopia and democracy in the performative space of Angélica Liddell</div></div>
	<div><div>Rui Pina Coelho</div><div>Performing Hope: Utopian Theatre in an Age of Collapse</div></div>	<div><div>Agata Tomšič</div><div>Capital in the 21st Century Contemporary Theatre: the joys and sorrows of different theatrical systems through ErosAntEros’ Saint Joan of the Stockyards lens</div></div>
	<div><div>Marcela Moura</div><div>Recycling as a process of decentralisation, distribution and democratisation</div></div>	<div><div>Stella Keramida</div><div>Protest and Theatricality: Democratising theatre and performance</div></div>
10.45–11.10am	Break	



11.10am– 12.25pm	Rehearsal Room 1 Panel 9.1 Theatre, institutions, democracy Chair: Marta Ribeiro	Rehearsal Room 2 Panel 9.2 Environments, aesthetic practices and affects Chair: Alix de Morant	Rehearsal Room 3 Panel 9.3 Ideas and engagements Chair: Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh
	Pieter Verstraete Exiled Lives on the Stage: Analyzing Life Narratives to Improve Democracies and Institutions	Theron Schmidt Decentering the researcher through affective attunement	Ana Maria Ursu Theater in flux: between the social and the artistic
	Lily Climenhaga The Dramaturgy of Republic: Representation(al) Democracy and the Wiener Festwochen	José Maria Vieira Mendes Who’s my friend? ‘Participation’ in Lucy McCornick’s, Lucy & Friends	Joseph Dunne-Howrie Staging Cultural Decline: The War on Woke at the Battle of Ideas
	Ana Bigotte Vieira, Tiago Ivo Cruz On Commemorations and Their Discontents: Independent Theatre and Decentralization After the Portuguese Revolution or... what remains after the 50th anniversary of April 25th in 2024?	Sayan Parial, Piyasha Halder Eco-Theatre Aesthetics and Practice: Affective Spaces of Performance	Azadeh Sharifi The Trans-European artistic practice of “teatro Phralipe” - OR: How to decentre European Theatre from its margins
12.25–12.40pm Break			

<p>12.40–1.30pm</p>	<p>Guildhall Associate Academic Keynote Milton Court Theatre</p> <p>Chaired by Jo Chard</p>	<p>In conversation with Campbell X Campbell X's work deals with queer memory, desire and Blackness across the African diaspora.</p> <p>He directed the award-winning queer urban romantic comedy feature film <i>STUD LIFE</i> which was voted by the Guardian as one of the top 10 Black British feature films ever made. It was also voted as one of the top 25 films of the century by film critic Ryan Gilbey.</p> <p>Campbell's second feature <i>Low Rider</i> has its world premiere in Edinburgh film Festival in 2025. <i>Low Rider</i> a queer road trip <i>Low Rider</i> was filmed in the Western Cape region of South Africa and stars Emma McDonald and Thishiwe Ziqubu.</p> <p>Campbell's short films are <i>DES/RE</i>, <i>VISIBLE</i>, <i>Still We Thrive</i> and recently <i>Untitled</i> (2025) an incantation to our indigenous trans and non-binary ancestors.</p> <p>Campbell also writes and directs theatre and was one of the writers at the Royal Court for <i>My White Best Friend</i> theatre series.</p> <p>He Co-directed <i>Talking About A Revolution</i> with Chinonyerem Odimba for Taita Fhodzi at the Pump House, Lyric Hammersmith and Bristol Old Vic.</p> <p>Campbell was one of the writers in Fuel Theatre's <i>When All Is Said</i> curated by Travis Alabanza</p> <p>Campbell curated <i>Transpose - JOY</i> a trans performance created by CN Lester, at the Barbican directed by Tabby Lamb, with performances by Mzz Kimberley, Felix Mufti and Ebony Rose Dark. Campbell co-curated <i>FAMILY</i> a QTIBIPOC diverse performance space with Kayza Rose with the collaboration at Duckie for three events at Rich Mix London.</p> <p>Website https://linktr.ee/campbellx Twitter/X https://twitter.com/CampbellX Instagram https://www.instagram.com/campbellx/</p> <p><i>Still We Thrive</i> (2022) is a visually rich and poetic short film that celebrates Black resilience, joy, and ancestral connection. Using archival footage, music, and spoken word - including works by Langston Hughes and Olive Senior - the film weaves a powerful tapestry of resistance and togetherness across time and geography. Written and directed by Campbell X, it honours the enduring spirit of Black communities in the face of global anti-Blackness, offering a moving meditation on survival, self-care, and collective flourishing.</p>
<p>1.30–3pm</p>	<p>World Café Method Plenary & Lunch Milton Court Studio Theatre</p> <p>Chaired by Peter M. Boenisch, EASTAP President</p>	<p>At this concluding conference lunch-plenary, we seek to discuss together the current alarming situation faced by theatre and performance departments, artists and theatre organizations, who find themselves threatened by cancellation, defunding, censorship and redundancy exercises. We want to discuss and brainstorm with you how EASTAP as an organisation might strengthen our communities, reach out and support colleagues, artists and allied institutions, and respond in meaningful ways to these threats, cuts, and ideology-based ruthless attacks on performing arts and research.</p> <p>The meeting will be facilitated using the World Café method.</p>



Campbell X.

Abstracts & biographies

Paper presentations

Agata Tomšič

Capital in the Twenty-First Century Contemporary Theater: the example of ErosAntEros' international and multilingual Saint Joan of the Stockyards, to reflect on the power of political theatre and the joys and sorrows of different theatrical systems

A reflection on different productive theatrical systems in Europe – also in terms of sustainability, accessibility, distribution – through the example of my latest international production with ErosAntEros theater group: a multidisciplinary show involving actors from 4 different languages and Laibach music band, which uses the dramaturgical parable of Bertolt Brecht's Saint Joan of the Stockyards to think on our present. Working on a big scale production of this kind is not easy, especially if it's the project of an independent theatre company that has to interface with several international public theaters. It is the result of years of research not only on the content, but in big part also on the finances necessary to make the production itself possible, living the paradox of struggling daily within a post-capitalist economic-productive system to create a show that has as its main theme the capitalist economy and the question of the possibility of its overthrow.

A 20th Century classic that questions the economic system of which the society and the production models in which we live are still part, will serve as a springboard for a double reflection: a) on the actuality of the play, even more shocking after the last American elections, the former Pope glorification after his death, the international geopolitical situation and the wars in which we are increasingly more complicit every day; b) on the theatrical systems in which it was produced, the difficulties encountered during its creation and still today in its distribution, results of the same economic-social system that Brecht criticized writing the text.

Biography

Actress, dramaturg, director, artistic director and theorist, she trained with Societas, Schaubühne, Odin Teatret, Motus, Living Theatre, Teatro Valdoca, Fanny & Alexander, Anagoor, and obtained her Master's degree in Performing Arts at the University of Bologna in 2014, continuing to publish her essays, translating and editing books, curating and participating in international conferences. In 2010 she founded with Davide Sacco the theatre company ErosAntEros, producing multidisciplinary and politically engaged performances with major European national theaters and festivals (Emilia Romagna Teatro, Cankarjev Dom, Mladinsko Gledališče, Théâtre National du Luxembourg, Ravenna Festival, Campania Teatro Festival, Teatro della Toscana, Teatro Piemonte Europa, Teatro Stabile di Bolzano, Teatro della Tosse). Since 2018 she codirects POLIS Teatro Festival, programming the protagonists of the European political scene in Ravenna. In 2023 she obtained a 2nd level Professional Master in Singin 20th Century and contemporary vocal music at Ravenna State conservatory. Increasingly affirming her role of artistic director and manager, her presence intensifies also within international projects and networks.

Aldo Milohnić

Decentring, Distributing and Democratising in the Theatre of Milo Rau

Milo Rau assumed the role of artistic director of the NTGent in 2018. One of his first gestures was The Ghent Manifesto, a concise programmatic text consisting of ten rules that each production of the NTGent has to follow (at least partially). The text did not set aesthetic demands, but rather established rules of production that were, until then, completely incompatible with institutions such as national or city theatres. Some of the key demands proclaimed in the manifesto clearly relate to the terms of decentring, distributing and democratising of theatrical production – the kind of production that Milo Rau established when he was artistic director of NTGent (and fosters similar ideas even today). We quickly realize this if we put together some of the demands from the manifesto: "The authorship is entirely up to those involved in the rehearsals and the performance, whatever their function may be. At least a quarter of the rehearsal time must take place outside a theatre. At least two different languages must be spoken on stage in each production. At least two of the actors on stage must not be professional actors. At least one production per season must be rehearsed or performed in a conflict or war zone, without any cultural infrastructure. Each production must be shown in at least ten locations in at least three countries." In my presentation, I will use The Ghent Manifesto as a starting point and will then discuss Milo Rau's methods of theatre production (such as tribunals, trials, assemblies, re-enactments, etc.) in close relationship with his theoretical writings.

Biography

Aldo Milohnić, PhD, is a professor of the history of theatre at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television of the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). He is author of the books Theories of Contemporary Theatre and Performance (2009), Art in Times of the Rule of Law and Capital (2016), Theatre of Resistance (2021), and I Worked for 40 Years: Dramatisations and Adaptations of Cankar's The Bailiff Yerney (2022). He is an editorial board member of the performing arts journals Amfiteater and European Journal of Theatre and Performance. His research interests include the history and theory of theatre, contemporary performing practices and the sociology of culture and arts.

Alejandro Postigo

Miss Brexit: Decentring Linguistic Hegemony in UK Theatre

In post-Brexit England, international theatre artists must navigate linguistic and cultural hierarchies that shape their access to professional opportunities. For a group of acting graduates who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) and trained in UK drama programs, these challenges manifest in accent bias, linguistic gatekeeping, and pressures to conform to Anglophone performance norms. In response, they devised 'Miss Brexit', a satirical performance that interrogates the expectations placed on migrant artists to assimilate.

Framed as a high-stakes contest, 'Miss Brexit' sees European contestants compete in absurd challenges where national stereotypes morph into British myths. The prize? The right to remain in the UK and pursue the Anglo-American dream. But at what cost? The show examines the precarious balance between survival and self-erasure, questioning who is allowed to belong in British theatre and on what terms. By centring multilingual performers, Miss Brexit disrupts dominant narratives that privilege native English speakers, offering an alternative vision where linguistic difference is an artistic asset rather than an obstacle.

This paper positions 'Miss Brexit' as a case study in the decentralisation of Anglocentric theatre norms. It explores how second-language performers subvert expectations, reclaim space, and advocate for a more inclusive industry. Supported by Arts Council England following a European tour, and presented at Omnibus Theatre before touring to Manchester and Edinburgh, the production amplifies the visibility of EAL performers, contributing to urgent conversations about power, language, and representation in the performing arts.

Biography

Alejandro Postigo is Senior Lecturer in Musical Theatre at the London College of Music, University of West London. His practice-based PhD from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (2019) explored the intercultural adaptation of Spanish copla, as seen in his award-winning 'The Copla Musical' and 'Copla: a Spanish Cabaret' (Intercultural Dialogue Award 2024, Offies-nominated for Best Production 2025). His latest show, 'Miss Brexit' (2022-25), supported by Arts Council England, tackles linguistic and cultural barriers in Anglophone theatre. Alejandro's research applies translation, queer, and intercultural theories to champion non-native English theatre and audible minorities in performance.

Alessandro Tollari

Democracy beyond language. Performing linguistic (un)learning otherwise

One of the elements that guarantee full access to democratic life is the possession of the means of linguistic communication. For this reason, at the heart of every nation's school curriculum is the teaching of the mother tongue. The paradigm of "cuius regio, eius lingua" (Weinreich), which in European states is never really put into crisis, not even in the face of multilingual situations or the pressures of migrations.

Moreover, the sphere of communication is dominated by discursive regimes and key-words that create common sense, activating forms of reality for which "there is no alternative", and deactivating the emergence of possibilities for different agency: words and phrases do not only describe the world, but – also and above all – create it, as recalled by Austin's theory of language performativity (and by the tale *The Grammarian's Five Daughters* by Eleanor Arnason)

The question posed here is whether and how the arts can contribute to a change in the imagery concerning the link between language learning and democratic education. The thesis is that these artistic disciplines, following the reflection on Lakoff's embodied linguistics and Ranciere's ignorant pedagogy, can play a role in unlearning. The argumentation starts from a personal experience: the attempt to implement a performative ludo-didactics through exercises proposed in the training of foreign language teachers (Italian in Albania). The critical issues encountered are then discussed through the analysis of three case studies: the project *The Institute for Anarchic and Artistic Language Learning* by Ahilan Ratnamohan (Belgium - Australia - Sri Lanka); the practices of onomaturgic creation by Noura Tafecche (Italy - Palestine); the site-specific performance *Walking Definitions* by the Eléctrico 28 collective (Spain).

In conclusion, this is the question I want to discuss: is it possible to think of democratic practices through forms of decentralisation and redistribution of linguistic power?

Biography

Alessandro Tollari (Turin, 1988) is a PhD student at the Iuav University of Venice and a humanities teacher in high school. His project *Schools of Other Worlds. Worlding between performing arts and radical pedagogies* is a research-creation that – through studies on utopia, critical fabulation, and fictional speculation – moves a critique to the school institution in the contemporary European context to activate possibilities of transformation of the educational imaginary. He is currently a consultant for the educational projects of *Lavanderia a Vapore* and *Hangar Piemonte* (Fondazione Piemonte dal Vivo) and *Attitudes spazio alle arti* (Bologna), as well as a cultural advisor and dramaturg for various companies on the national performing arts scene. In 2025 he is a participant in the Independent Program of the Institute for Postnatural Studies (Madrid) and a visiting student at the Culture Commons Quest Office of the University of Antwerp. He is junior editor for *Roots & Routes* – research on visual cultures.

Alice Golisano

The European Pavilion: An alternative method for the decentring of artistic practices outside national narratives

When hearing the word ‘pavilion’ in relation to the artworld, our minds inevitably drift towards the Venice Biennale and its exaltation of artistic endeavours entangled in national narratives. Against this backdrop, with the intention of steering away from it, the European Cultural Foundation created the ‘European Pavilion’, a movement dedicated to finding new approaches to contemporary challenges. What is a nation? What is Europe? How do we deal with borders and the other(s)?

The Foundation approach to the Pavilion was trans-disciplinary, trans-border and trans-sectorial: the artistic proposals had to be socially engaged, keep in mind both locality and plurality, and offer learning opportunities for the communities.

The summer of 2024 saw the unwinding of its latest funded project: Liquid Becomings. Various European collectives joined forces with the association Espaço AgoraNow, setting out on a mission to trace alternative paths across the European continent by sailing its rivers and reach out to the communities living on their shores. Eco-friendly boats that could be easily assembled and disassembled were built for this specific project, so that artists from 37 countries could sail across four European rivers. Rivers seen as the circulatory system of the continent. Rivers representing the struggle for freedom. Rivers that remind us of the fluidity of European identities, and that national borders are fictitious lines inscribed in fear.

Building on scholarship on artistic resistance and border studies, I intend to present the endeavours of the Pavilion, and of its Liquid Becomings, as an unconventional approach facilitating the creation of an artistic reaction to the waves of ethnonationalism through the physical decentralisation of creative practices.

Biography

Postdoctoral researcher at the universities of Cergy Paris and Ljubljana, in collaboration with the European Cultural Foundation, my research projects always deal with the potential of artistic spaces to be places of political and social debate, and spaces of negotiations of identities. My current project looks at arts and borders: one case studies the impact of cross-border cultural events on its communities, and viceversa the impact of a border on the art created in its region, looking specifically at the border between Italy and Slovenia; the other case studies Liquid Becomings as an artistic endeavour to bypass borders.

Ana Maria Ursu

Theater in flux: between the social and the artistic

Contemporary theatre is redefining its purpose, shifting from mere aesthetic appreciation to becoming a vital platform for social reflection and utility. This “theatre in flux” blurs the lines between artistic and social functions, fundamentally altering the questions of “for whom are we performing?” and “who plays theatre?”. Aesthetic judgment often becomes secondary to a performance’s ability to provide a voice, stimulate empathy, and foster debate within a community.

Community theatre, central to this shift, thrives on the pervasive presence of its audience as co-creators and interpreters of their own stories. This tripartite integration—audience, stage, and narrative—transforms theatre into a participatory art form, leveraging the fundamental ideas of Brecht and Boal to become a social laboratory. Post-2000, the Romanian theatre landscape has seen a strong emergence of independent theatre, driven by a focus on social and community themes. This includes decentralization, with artists moving into alternative spaces like Reactor and Basca, and engaging in touring or online projects. This increased mobility allows theatre to reach neglected audiences, contrasting with institutional rigidity.

The Basca Theatre in Timișoara exemplifies this transformation. Founded in 2017, Basca focuses on documentary theatre and social inclusion, working with marginalized communities. Projects like “Butterflies are Free” and “Puf Buf” prioritize accessibility for people with disabilities, integrating sign language as a core artistic element. “Overhead” gives voice to the homeless, while “Theatre in Your Backyard” brings free performances to rural areas, fostering community cohesion and access to culture. Basca’s international presence further validates its innovative model, demonstrating how it transcends the traditional cultural institution to act as a social laboratory and catalyst for positive change.

Biography

Ana-Maria Ursu is a theater director, actress and activist from Romania. She founded the BASCA Theater in Timișoara, Romania in 2017. Her work was awarded with the British Council Award at the Romanian UNITER Gala in 2021. She works on community driven theatrical projects inside specific groups and also on mainstream artistic endeavors. She is a 1st year student working towards her PhD in theater at the George Enescu University in Iași, Romania in co-tutorship with the Sociology Faculty of the West University in Timișoara, Romania.

Andrea Malosio

Video as a fairy-tale element in the theatre of the Italian company Fanny&Alexander

The theatre of Italian company Fanny&Alexander has defined a very recognizable and iconic aesthetic, incorporating in the performances different devices, media and languages: video mixes with live performance; literature and novels enter into a dialogue with an important visual dimension; the word can no longer be separated from the sonority that accompanies it, which clearly confirms the intermedial and contaminating research that Fanny&Alexander carries out, going so far as to identify it as an example of hypermediacy, as defined by Chapple and Kattenbelt. The speech focuses on three case studies, three cycles of performances in which the company creates a dramaturgy from famous novels with young protagonists, from fairy or dark tales: “Il mago di Oz” (The Wizard of Oz), 2007–2019; “L’amica geniale”, 2018–2022; “Trilogia della città di K.” (Trilogie des jumeaux), 2023. The privileged object of the analysis is the use of the video, whose ontological and dramaturgical dimension is examined by offering an interpretation in relation to the functions that the audiovisual component fulfils. It is a hermeneutic attempt aimed at the role and meaning of video on stage: the reworking and reuse of the literary element interwoven with media and technology produce a metamorphosis of the source material, decentre from the starting point to give new life to the stories and new perspectives to the audience. Different functions of the digital device can be observed here but the video represents always a way of entering another world, often a fantastic or dreamlike one, to represent an elsewhere or the other from oneself, to place a distance from what is happening on stage in order to better observe it, to decentre, distribute and, maybe, democratise the gaze.

Biography

Andrea Malosio, born in Milan in 1996, is a PhD student at the University of Turin in “Performance arts and new technologies”, where he is conducting research on the relationship between video and live performance in drama and opera theatre. He has a master’s degree in Modern Literature from the University of Milan, with a thesis in theatrical studies on the dramaturgical works of the Italian comedy company Carrozzeria Orfeo, published by CuePress in 2023. He collaborated with the Department of Cultural Heritage of the University of Milan. He collaborates with the magazine of theatrical criticism “Stratagemmi – Prospettive Teatrali”.

Angelina Demarchi-Roussel

Opera and Street Art: Reclaiming an Art Form and New Creative Challenges. A Case Study of the Theatrical Brass Band Les Grooms

Opera houses and operatic heritage were, particularly in the 19th century, primarily a matter of social representation for audiences and symbolic of cultural and heritage grandeur for a city, or even a nation (Chabert, 2003; Brook, 2020). The elitist and hyper-centralized nature of opera—and more broadly, of lyrical art—has long been questioned and even criticized. As early as 1840, composer Adolphe Adam expressed his “dream of an opera for the people” (Saint-Cyr, 2006). It was, however, from the second half of the 20th century, following the implementation of cultural policies and, among other things, their aim to support and promote cultural offerings in regional areas (Urfalino, 2011), that specific initiatives in the operatic sector began to emerge. These were led by structured organizations—companies, collectives, ensembles, and/or cultural institutions. Since then, their goal has been to present lyrical art outside its traditional institutions and original artistic framework (Saez, 2017). The idea of decentralization is strongly present here, in the sense that multiple hierarchies are being challenged: institutional hierarchies—some aim to break away from them—and artistic hierarchies, as lyrical art is incorporated into a broader creative whole, placed on the same level as any other adopted medium. At the same time, street arts have been thriving since the 1970s (Gaber, 2014); one of their main goals is to reclaim the act of creation while investing in the street and public space (Gonon, 2019).

It is in this historical, political, and cultural context that the theatrical brass band Les Grooms was born, with the primary ambition to work “on a very close relationship between music and theatrical presence, as well as on a repertoire seeking eclecticism and a juxtaposition between highbrow and popular music.” The band quickly began creating or recreating lyrical works designed for, in, and with public spaces—and even took their performances abroad. The group has performed in the UK, Germany, Algeria, Korea... and some shows are still touring today.

How does one conceptualize a lyrical work that is both designed for public space and suitable for international audiences? Regarding the idea of hierarchy, what kinds of creative reflections does this generate? How can one be an agent of both cultural and artistic decentralization? What musical and scenographic approaches can be observed in Les Grooms’ (re) creations and adaptations? What artistic, cultural, and political issues in today’s performing arts does this approach address?

Ann-Christine Simke

Decentring Theatre Production – Intersectional Feminist Theatre Making in Scotland's Regions

Exporting lyrical art outside its structural and institutional center—into public space— encourages an expansion of creative horizons, through the incorporation of other media and artistic disciplines, or through scenographic approaches that enable, among other things, audience inclusion (proximity devices, participation of amateur audiences...). The same applies to cultural horizons, with the consideration of each territory hosting the artistic proposal. Through the study of this company and an analysis of some of its creations, we will identify the main creative positions adopted by Les Grooms within the framework of both artistic hybridization (cross-disciplinarity) and cultural hybridization (appropriation of diverse spaces, sometimes across countries and cultures), with decentralization issues as a central driving force.

Biography

Having studied Cultural Project Management and then a Master's degree in research in live performance, I am also an lyrical artist and singing teacher, formed at the Conservatoire of Grenoble.

As an artist, I work on the theatricalization of singing, and more specifically lyrical singing, but also on the notions of transmitting this art through other presentation approaches, for example. I wanted to continue my research work, which I began in my Master's degree, with a doctoral thesis, so I am enrolled at the University of Poitiers, under the supervision of Cécile Auzolle ; my research topic focuses on the challenges of the lyrical creation sector in the 21st century. Between diversity and hybridization.

This paper will focus on institutional changes in the Scottish theatre company Stellar Quines (SQ) and their ongoing work towards decentring their commissioning, producing and performance practice.

SQ is Scotland's – and one of the UK's – leading intersectional feminist theatre companies dedicated to promoting performance's role in ensuring gender justice for all. SQ was established in 1993 to address the lack of opportunities for women in theatre in all areas of production. Today, the company profile has significantly changed, broadened its remit of engagement and sharpened its explicitly political intersectional feminist profile. SQ creates and co-produces theatre shows and supports artists' on all levels of their career development, both on stage and backstage. The company also commissions research, engages in campaigns and supports creative community projects with the aim of achieving greater equality.

SQ is at a pivotal moment in the organisation's development; in November 2024, they moved their base of operation from Edinburgh's cultural centre to a new, permanent base in Kirkcaldy, Fife. This move is concurrent with and resultant from a radical reappraisal of SQ's creative and working practices to decentre their commissioning and producing practice and focus on community engagement and co-creation.

The paper proposes to analyse SQ development towards a decentred practice on two levels. Firstly, what does the move away from the Central Belt and specifically Edinburgh with a diverse theatre ecology to a culturally less diverse and underfunded periphery (Fife) mean for the funding and producing structures of the company as well as their intersectional feminist mission? What challenges and affordances does this move initiate? Secondly, how does a decentring strategy away from a CEO-led commissioning and producing structure towards a community-informed practice look like, and how does it affect the future development plans of this professional theatre company?

Biography

Dr Ann-Christine Simke is a Lecturer in Performance at the University of the West of Scotland. Her work has been published in *Theatre Research International*, *Global Performance Studies* and *Contemporary Theatre Review*. She is currently under contract for a co-authored (with Anika Marschall) book on intersectional theatre practices and is lead investigator on the RSE-funded research project 'Towards Racial Literacy in European Theatre'.

Anna Bigotte Vieira, Tiago Igo Cruz

On Commemorations and Their Discontents: Independent Theatre and Decentralization After the Portuguese Revolution or... what remains after the 50th anniversary of April 25th in 2024?

In 2024, Portugal celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution. Through the combined efforts of the official commemorations committee and various local, private, and semi-private initiatives, thousands of events took place across multiple disciplines. A significant effort was made to engage with historical memory, including the identification and recovery of archives, performances, and the publication of several critical editions exploring different aspects of the revolutionary period of 1974–75.

One year earlier, DGARTES concluded its first pilot funding program for theatre and dance archives. More than twenty companies were funded nationwide. Despite its success — marking the first time theatre companies had the financial means to work on their archives — the program was discontinued. Similarly, 2024 also saw the conclusion of ARTHE – Archiving Theatre, the first academic research project dedicated to the study of independent theatre and cultural decentralization in Portugal.

These three initiatives represent a turning point, driving a historiographical shift in the study of Portuguese theatre. They provide an essential foundation for a rigorous and historically accurate understanding of the theatrical and cultural landscape that shaped democracy after the Revolution. However, their abrupt termination—alongside a lack of institutional commitment to continuing such work—raises a pressing question: what remains after the commemoration of April 25th 50th anniversary?

Reflecting on the nature of commemorations, Portuguese essayist Eduarda Dionísio (1993) argued that they often serve to neutralize the transformative potential of historical moments. Similarly, in *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, cultural critic Kristin Ross (2008) describes how May '68 was gradually reduced to a cultural event, stripped of its political agenda. Without continuity or further institutional support, the three initiatives discussed here risk suffering the same fate—becoming nothing more than ephemeral cultural gestures rather than catalysts for ongoing political engagement.

In this presentation, we will outline the methodologies and advancements introduced by these projects in the archiving practices of contemporary performing arts in Portugal. Additionally, we will examine the political implications of their discontinuation, particularly how it compromises the study of decentralization processes.

Biographies

Ana Bigotte Vieira is Co-IR of the FCT Archiving Theatre project (PTDC/ART- PER/1651/2021). Her research has focused on the relationship between experimentalism in the arts and cultural and urban transformations, addressing particularly the performing arts and embodied practices, such as dance, theatre, community based or radical pedagogy. She is co-editor of the collective anthological “dança não dança – archaeologies of new dance in Portugal” (NCM/ FCG, 2024) and “A Caixa Preta e Outros Mal-Entendidos” (Sistema Solar, 2024). Her PhD research was published in both Portuguese and English under the title “A CURATORSHIP OF LACK – ACARTE 1984–1989 (Sistema Solar 2021). She is a researcher at the IHC Institute of Contemporary History, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, and was a collaborator at the Center for Theatre Studies, Universidade de Lisboa (2009–2023).

Tiago Ivo Cruz is a PhD Candidate at School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon with FCT scholarship. He is also a researcher at the Centre for Theatre Studies and Museu Nacional de Teatro e da Dança, as well as ARTHE – Archiving Theatre.

Annelies Van Assche

Krumping the Opera: a Choreographic Coup or Baroque Spectacle 2.0?

This paper examines the radical decentring of the elite cultural space of the Opéra Bastille in a 2019 reinterpretation of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* (1735). Originally grounded in Enlightenment-era colonialist ideals, Rameau's opera-ballet reinforced Eurocentric narratives of exoticism and civility. In contrast, Clément Cogitore's restaging, with choreography by Bintou Dembélé, subverts these traditions and redistributes artistic agency by integrating urban dance forms—Krump, breakdancing, and voguing—into the operatic framework. Central to this performance is the symbolic and physical displacement of ballet dancers and opera singers by street dancers, many with migration backgrounds from the Global South. This radical reimagining transforms a bastion of elite authority into a space of resistance.

Nowhere is this more evident than in “*Entrée IV - The Savages*,” where Krump dancers take centre stage in “*The Dance of the Great Peace Pipe*,” asserting a “choreographic abundance,” a concept drawn from Argentinian dance scholar Juan Vallejós, that democratizes movement traditions. This stylistic and physical overflow “muddies the canon” by elevating marginalized movement languages while resisting the exclusionary and elitist aesthetics of European ballet and opera.

Performed at the historically charged Opéra Bastille, the production conjures revolutionary imagery, recalling the storming of the Bastille as “the streets” reclaim elite space. This reconfiguration of cultural authority challenges colonial and class-based exclusions, demonstrating the potential of performance to disrupt hegemonic narratives. Yet, as the paper will explore, the institutional embrace of street dance also raises critical questions about the limits of decentring, (re) distributing, and democratising and the possible pitfalls of such efforts: does inclusion within opera risk assimilating these forms into the very structures they resist? Through this analysis, the paper interrogates performance's capacity to decentre dominant narratives, democratise the canon, and redistribute artistic power in meaningful ways.

Biography

Annelies Van Assche obtained a joint doctoral degree in Art Studies and Social Sciences in 2018 for studying the working conditions of European contemporary dance artists. She is a postdoctoral researcher at the department of Art History, Musicology and Theater Studies of Ghent University and lecturer at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp's dance department. Her research focuses on the relation between labor and aesthetics in contemporary dance. She is author of *Labor and Aesthetics in European Contemporary Dance*. *Dancing Precarity* (2020) and co-editor of *(Post)Socialist Dance. A Search for Hidden Legacies* (2024). She's a member of research group S:PAM, CoDa - European Research Network for Dance Studies, and the Young Academy of Flanders.

Asta Petrikienė

Visions from Peripheral Europe: Lithuanian Presence in the International Theatre Landscape

This paper examines the rise and settlement of Lithuanian theatre on the international stage. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Lithuanian theatre gained significant recognition, with directors such as Eimuntas Nekrošius and Oskaras Koršunovas shaping a distinctive theatrical language that resonated globally. Festivals across Europe and beyond showcased Lithuanian productions, establishing the country as a significant force in avant-garde and experimental theatre. However, this momentum has transformed in recent years due to shifting cultural policies, changing artistic trends, and evolution in international collaborations.

This study is framed within the concepts of the world-systems theory (Wallerstein) and cultural capital (Bourdieu), analyzing how Lithuanian theatre positioned itself within global hierarchies of prestige and artistic influence. The center-periphery model developed by Immanuel Wallerstein is instrumental in contextualizing how Lithuanian theatre moved from the periphery toward a semi-peripheral status, gaining recognition through festival networks and auteur-driven productions before settling in the international theatre landscape. By examining festival participation, institutional shifts, and audience reception, the paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Lithuanian theatre's fluctuating international status and the potential for future development.

Biography

Asta Petrikienė (dr.) is a research fellow with the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute and a lecturer at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Lithuania). In recent years, she has participated in several research projects, including “*Reclaimed Avant-garde*” (2017–2022), funded by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Her scientific research focuses on Lithuanian theatre history, especially the institutional aspect of theatre development.

Avra Sidiropoulou

Directing, Leadership, and the Ethics of Care

In the 21st century, the theatre industry has grown fiercely competitive, negatively impacting the mental and emotional health of many theatre-makers. Following the pandemic, artistic precarity has intensified, with increased financial insecurity, limited resources, unrealistic demands for ticket sales, and excessively long working hours. Additionally, the #MeToo movement has brought to light significant issues of power abuse within the field, fuelling persistent stereotypes of directors as despots/bullies within a deeply patriarchal system. Coupled with the instability of neoliberal working conditions—where directors give or take actors' and artists' jobs with little warning—this reinforces the enduring image of the director as an all-powerful figure who controls others without compassion, a notion that remains largely uncontested.

As the world is changing, it feels imperative to build structures that can cultivate and support a culture of inclusivity and care in rehearsal and to develop new skills to navigate new sets of complexities. My paper argues that within a climate of profound insecurity and continuing social, economic and cultural turmoil, director leadership—so far prioritizing authority, influence and control—needs to be further enriched. Specifically, it should address complications that arise from power dynamics, questions of inclusivity, issues of intimacy and respectful consideration of identity politics, all of which are fundamental to a democratic creative process. In this presentation, I will explore fresh notions of leadership, based on updated forms of director training and the cultivation of a team culture where members feel valued and empowered. In this light, to adjust to society's rapidly shifting attitudes, directors should be introduced to practices that involve attentiveness, responsiveness and taking responsibility for the well-being of others. Approaches that support artistic autonomy include, but are not limited to, minimizing hierarchical control, challenging ableist practices, promoting creative experimentation, and nurturing an environment that values diversity, well-being, and accessibility.

Biography

Avra Sidiropoulou is Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Associate Professor at the Open University of Cyprus. She is the author of *Directions for Directing: Theatre and Method* (Routledge 2019) and *Authoring Performance: The Director in Contemporary Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan 2011); co-editor of *Adapting Greek Tragedy: Contemporary Contexts for Ancient Texts* (CUP 2021) and editor of *Staging 21st Century Tragedies: Theatre, Politics, and Global Crisis* (Routledge 2022). Avra is a professional director and runs Athens-based Persona Theatre Company. She is a member of the Executive Committee of EASTAP and was nominated for the 2020 Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award by the League of Professional Theatre Women.

Azadeh Sharifi

The Trans-European artistic practice of "teatro Phralipe" - OR: How to decentre European Theatre from its margins

Teatro Phralipe was one of the most important Roma theatre groups in Europe. The long history and various stages of their theatre stretch from Skopje, North Macedonia, in 1971 and end in Cologne, Germany, in 2004. Founded by Rahim Burhan, the theatre group focused from the beginning on Romani as a stage language and the cultural, social and political references of diverse Roma communities. Teatro Phralipe is probably the first European Roma theatre, or that is what is claimed by non-Roma scholars, as there is an evident lack of research on Roma theatre practitioners. Following Miguel Ángel Vargas and Dragan Risti, who curated the section on theatre and drama on the website www.romarchive.eu, a website dedicated to archiving the history of Roma people, they argue that Roma artists have been present in the development of European theatre. They refer to "the heterogeneous creation of particular aesthetics, poetry and dramaturgy as part of a corpus of gestures, forms and intentions that are impossible to codify in a rigid way" (Risti & Vargas, Romarchive).

Focusing on the artistic practice that Rahim Burhan and the artists of Teatro Phralipe implemented, especially during their time in Germany, this paper looks into how Phralipe's aesthetics, poetry and dramaturgy can be read as a Trans-European practice that over the span of three decades evolved in different directions, influenced by political, social and cultural occurrences and artistic movements. By tracing their practice, this paper also aims to examine how Teatro Phralipe questions European theatre historiography and therefore decentres it from a geographical and sociopolitical perspective.

Biography

Azadeh Sharifi is a theatre and performance scholar, currently teaching at the University of Fine Arts Berlin. She was a visiting professor at Free University Berlin, the University of Toronto, and the University of the Arts (UdK) Berlin. Her research focuses on (post)colonial and (post)migrant theatre and their histories, contemporary performance art, and decolonial and activist practices in theatrical spaces. She is currently working on the monograph *Theatre in Post-migrant Germany*. Her recent co-edited publication *Theaterwissenschaft postkolonial/ decolonial* has been published with transcript (2022).

Bilal Akar

Decolonizing and Decentring the Archive: The Nebula of “Kurdish Princess” Leila Bederkhan

Leila Bederkhan, a Kurdish-Jewish modern dancer, occupied a liminal space in interwar European performance, navigating Orientalist expectations, gendered restrictions, and statelessness. While modern dance history celebrates figures like Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller, Bederkhan’s contributions remain obscured, relegated to the margins of Eurocentric historiography. Her career underscores the urgency of decentring dominant narratives of modern dance, democratizing archival practices, and decolonizing performance historiography, raising critical questions: Whose performances are preserved in the archive? How do power structures shape artistic visibility? How can performance serve as a space of agency for those at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalization?

This paper examines the “nebula” of Leila Bederkhan—a fragmented constellation of archival traces, self-fashioned narratives, and shifting receptions—through multi-sited archival research and ethnographic fieldwork within decolonial frameworks. It interrogates how Bederkhan’s performances, including her role in Ottorino Respighi’s *Belkis*, Regina di Saba, both engaged with and resisted the colonial and male gaze, challenging her positioning as an “exotic” dancer. At the same time, Bederkhan strategically self-fashioned the identity of a “Kurdish Princess”, negotiating the constraints of post-imperial migration, racialized spectacle, and gendered expectations.

By reconceptualizing the archive as a performative space shaped by power, omission, and contested memory, this paper explores how Bederkhan’s legacy can be reinterpreted through decolonial cultural historiography. Drawing from Diana Taylor’s notion of embodied archives and Édouard Glissant’s right to opacity, it considers how memory, migration, and identity complicate linear historical narratives. Engaging with statelessness, exile, and archival gaps, Bederkhan’s case calls for rethinking access, representation, and historiographical frameworks in performance studies.

Ultimately, this study illuminates methodologies for decentring dance historiography, democratizing archival research, and reclaiming erased artistic figures, situating Bederkhan within a broader dialogue on decolonial performance and cultural memory in post-imperial Europe.

Biography

Bilal Akar is a Ph.D. candidate in Cultural and Environmental Heritage and a research associate at the University of Milan’s Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Performance and Politics. His research explores political and minoritarian performance, decolonization, and diaspora cultural production, with a focus on Kurdish artistic performances. Trained in sociology and history, he works on *Negotiating Abjection: Performance and Politics Among Turkey’s Diasporas in Lombardy*. Also an actor and playwright, he co-founded the Culture and Theater Research Association in Istanbul in 2017, which organizes critical training for theatre makers.

Burcu Güney Yılmaz

Cultural and Creative Infrastructure in Devolved Regions: What Do Universities Do?

After almost a decade since the initial proposal, Greater Lincolnshire is about to complete its devolution process by becoming the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA). Alongside a £720 million funding package, this transition involves a substantial shift in governance, aiming to transfer decision-making power and resources from national to local authorities. While the intersection of creative, cultural, and heritage sectors with the UK’s devolution agenda has begun to attract significant scholarly attention (Easton et al., 2024), the long-term vision for the cultural and creative infrastructure models that may emerge from this process is as-yet undefined.

Within this evolving landscape, the University of Lincoln—a post-92 university and a newly designated National Portfolio Organisation (2023)—offers a critical case study for exploring decentralisation, distribution, and the democratisation of culture and creativity, particularly in the context of capacity building in rural regions. Through its Centre for Culture and Creativity (C4CC) and newly established Cultural and Creative Governance Board (CCGB), the university works to bridge the urban–rural divide, enhance digital access to cultural and creative activities, and embed this vision within local development strategies. However, questions remain regarding the influence of funding and governance hierarchies—specifically, whether HEIs can help build more democratic local cultural infrastructures, or whether they risk recentralising power within academic and governmental peripheries.

This paper provides a brief overview of the University of Lincoln’s current role within the GLCCA as an advocate and provider of arts and cultural activity, and raises new questions about the evolving relationship between HEIs and cultural and creative ecosystems in the UK’s devolved regions.

Biography

Burcu Güney Yılmaz is a multidisciplinary artist and writer, currently a Graduate Teaching Fellow at the University of Lincoln and a Researcher in Residence at the Lincoln Arts Centre and the Barbican Creative Hub. She is pursuing a PhD in Performing Arts, investigating the role of higher education-based arts providers in cultural and creative ecosystems.

Christina Banalopoulou

Multilingual Soundscapes, Democratized Pedagogies: Theatre and Performance in Rum Minority Schools in Turkey

How can theatre and performance constitute diversity by embracing the decentralizing aspects of multilingual soundscapes? My research explores this question by combining multi-sited archival and ethnographic research at Rum minority schools in Turkey. I investigate how students utilize theatre and performance in order to expand multilingualism and decenter the “official” sound of the schools in ways that map new sensorial experiences of listening and being heard.

The curricula of the Rum minority schools are divided into courses taught in Turkish and Greek. The involved educators, students, and administrators experience bilingualism as an impediment to quality education. In order to increase their enrollment and stay open, however, the schools now admit Arabic-speaking Rum students. While Turkish and Greek are at least considered part of the official duophonic sound of the schools, Arabic is administered in discriminatory ways that render it expendable. Students who are fluent in Arabic do not have any opportunity to communicate in Arabic in any official form inside the classroom, not even through non-mandatory elective courses.

During intermissions and rehearsals for the school theatre and dance festivals, however, all three languages shape polyphonic soundscapes in decentralizing ways. Students utilize performance in order to reclaim the constitution of polyphonic mosaics as a bottom-up process rather than as an externally imposed demand. My presentation will show how the relational polyphonies that emerge in the act of performance-making resist centralization both structurally and on levels of individual empowerment. This is particularly important since the educational bias against multilingualism and polyphonies directly affects the students’ interpersonal and professional lives.

Biography

Christina Banalopoulou holds a PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park. She currently works as a visiting assistant professor in the project Archives of Abjection: Minoritarian Cultural Production in Turkey and Its Diasporas at the University of Milan. Christina’s primary areas of interest include minoritarian performance, feminist economics, and the intersections between the somatic and the political, with a focus on the Mediterranean. Her essays have been published or are forthcoming in peer-reviewed journals, including *Performance Research*, *Theatre Research International*, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *Rethinking Marxism*, *The Journal of Philosophical Economics*, and *Performance Philosophy*.

Christopher Balme

What’s democratic about theatre?

Even disinterested observers of theatre, particularly in Germany, but elsewhere as well, have probably noticed an upsurge in statements and utterances that mention theatre and democracy in the same breath. The common assumption linking them is that the two institutions are somehow inextricably related: the one hardly conceivable without the other. Whether theatre makers, politicians or theatre scholars the urge to connect the two institutions appears both irresistible and urgent. This paper will argue against this apparent natural affinity. It will employ philosophy of language and theatre history to demonstrate that the urge of various stakeholders is predicated on using ‘democracy’ as a ‘positive affective’ to bolster theatre’s embattled status in current. The paper is divided into three sections. In the first part I shall elaborate what I mean by ‘affectives’. This part draws largely on the philosophy of language in the Austinian tradition because the term is clearly indebted to J. L. Austin’s notion of ‘performatives’, one of the most influential philosophical concepts of the past fifty years. In the second section I shall discuss the recent tendency to equate theatre and democracy and argue that the appeals are primarily to democracy in its affective usage and not as a reflection of any real-existing applications of democracy. The third section will provide counter arguments from a theatre-historical perspective: why the equation is simplistic and will argue that theatre can flourish (and wither) under a wide variety of political systems: theocratic, feudal, even fascistic as the example from Mussolini’s Italy will demonstrate.

Biography

Christopher Balme is professor emeritus of theatre studies and co-director of the Research Centre global dis:connect at LMU Munich. He was principal investigator of the DFG-funded research network „Configurations of Crisis“ and the ERC Advanced Grant “Developing Theatre: Building Expert Networks for Theatre in Emerging Countries after 1945“.

Clare Finburgh Delijani

Democratizing and Decolonizing Theatre in Mid-Century France: The Théâtre noir de Paris (Paris Black Theatre) and The Théâtre de la langue française (Theatre of the French Language)

It is hardly an exaggeration to sum the history of postcolonial theatre in France up as Aimé Césaire's *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* (The Tragedy of King Christophe) staged at Paris's Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe in 1963, and Rébecca Chaillon's *Carte noire nommé désir* staged at the same theatre in 2023, with precious little in the intervening sixty years. While these two high-profile, productions were greatly publicized, they do not tell the full story of theatre-makers in France who have advocated for the decolonization of territories and mentalities, and who have staged France's multi-ethnic, multi-faith, postcolonial present.

This paper will narrate the little-told story of two theatres which, while far less publicized than major productions at the Odéon, have been key to democratizing theatrical voices, and to the consequent creation of the genre of postcolonial theatre in France. The Théâtre noir de Paris (Paris Black Theatre), founded in 1975, was France's first theatre to be run by an Afrodescendant team, and to stage predominantly Afrodescendant texts performed by Afrodescendant actors. Informed by archival research and my interview with the Théâtre noir de Paris's founder, Benjamin Jules-Rosette, I illustrate how this theatre offered not only a vital means of creative expression to writers, directors and performers who were otherwise restricted to clichéd options in mainstream theatre; but also served as a means by which audiences could learn, often for the first time, about France's colonial past and its impact on postcolonial communities. The Théâtre de la langue française (Theatre of the French Language), founded by the French director Gabriel Garran in 1985, launched the careers of a host of major African writers including the Congolese Tchicaya U Tan'si and Sony La'bou Tamsi, and Ivorian Koffi Kwahulé. If Black cultures occupy a certain space on the French stage today, it is thanks to the democratizing initiatives of two theatrical establishments.

Biography

Clare Finburgh Delijani is the recipient of a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2023–6) and works in the Department of Theatre and Performance at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has written and edited many books and articles on theatre from the French-speaking world and the UK, including special issues of *Théâtre/Public* on postcolonial theatre (2023); *Watching War on the Twenty-First-Century Stage: Spectacles of Conflict* (2017); *Rethinking the Theatre of the Absurd: Ecology, the Environment and the Greening of the Modern Stage* (2015, with Carl Lavery) and *Jean Genet* (2012, with David Bradby). She is editor of *A New History of Theatre in France* (2024) and is currently writing *Spectres of Empire: Performing Postcoloniality in France* (contracted with Liverpool University Press) on theatre that addresses France's colonial past, and postcolonial present.

Cláudia Madeira, Racquel Rodrigues

Where is "The Centre of the World"? The spectator beyond the centre and periphery in the performances of Ana Borralho and João Galante.

In the contemporary hypermediated scene – which here can be understood simultaneously as artistic, social or political – performativity seems to migrate to digital universes, such as social networks, around which interactions, relationships and their agents gravitate. In these ever-changing fields, which are increasingly hybrid, intermedial and platformised, the spectator/participant has also acquired an imprecise agency in the performances.

In this presentation, we will analyse this particular place of the spectator as an agent who wanders between and beyond both centre and periphery – in a territory that we can call hyper(de)centralized – based on the recent performances by Ana Borralho and João Galante: *ChatRoom* (2023) and *The Centre of the World* (2024).

If in *ChatRoom* (2023), the theatre stage is taken by a 'global screen' (Lipovetsky, 2010), real and metaphorical, where performers and audience create through images and sounds an unpredictable performance; in *The Centre of the World* (2024) this paradigm is reversed and the spectator is placed 'inside', in the centre of performance. Through the use of AR and VR, the spectator is invited to immerse in a dark space (Alston & Welton, 2016), where a dystopian universe is gradually created from the individual imaginary of the characters, who propose a critical reflection on the daily tensions that run through political, economic and social issues, and which move, without an obvious order, from the most intimate to the very public.

Starting from the analysis of these performances where the notion of centre is expanded in different propositions (screen; spectator; VR), we intend to address questions such as: What aspects change in the theatrical performance and in its interaction with the audience, when the dramaturgy is built from the proposition of different centres? How do the notions of centre and periphery relate in this context? What conditions for participation are speculated in these meta-democratic dimensions?

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Biography

Cláudia Madeira is an Assistant Professor and deputy coordinator of Performance & Cognition RG at ICNOVA and a IHA collaborator at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the New University of Lisbon, and responsible for the cluster Performance Art & Performativity in the Arts. She also collaborates at the CET/FLUL in the Theatre and Image Research group. She has completed a postdoctoral programme, *Social Art, Performative Art?* (2009–12) and holds a PHD in Sociology on *Performing Arts Hybridity in Portugal* (2007). In addition to several articles on new forms of hybridism and performativity in the arts, she is the author of *Performance Art in Portugal* (Routledge, 2023); *Arte da Performance made in Portugal* (ICNOVA, 2020), among others.

Raquel Rodrigues Madeira (Lisbon, 1984) is a dancer, and researcher in ICNOVA (Performance & Cognition RG and Scenic Experimentation Laboratory). PhD student in Communication Sciences (Communication and Arts) at NOVA|FCSH University of Lisbon. FCT scholarship holder with the project «From the Internet to the Dance stages: participation, intermediality and new collaborations between the physical and the digital». Master in Scenic Arts by NOVA University of Lisbon and graduated in Dance by ESD|Higher School of Dance. Distinguished in 2022 with 'Estudar a Dança' Award, by DGPC through the National Theater and Dance Museum, sponsored by the Millennium BCP Foundation.

Daniela Sacco

Democratisation and Decentralisation: The Case of Indigenous Theatre in Quebec

The presentation explores the relationship between democratisation and decentralisation. These two concepts have never appeared so deeply intertwined as they do today, particularly when viewed through a decolonial lens. This perspective challenges the traditional relationship between democracy and the centrality of the agora, displacing it from the heart of the polis—where theatre first emerged in the Western world—to the peripheries, the margins, and the zones excluded from governance. It shifts focus to liminal spaces inhabited by foreigners—those who, by virtue of being outside and decentralised, have historically been defined as “barbarians.” Today, these “barbarians” seek to remain as such. They aim to occupy the margins deliberately, asserting their alienation from the imperial system and exposing the paradoxes and violence often embedded in the very notion of integration. These reflections will be informed by case studies drawn from the Canadian context, particularly from performative practices associated with Indigenous theatre in Quebec—a theatre that reclaims and reconnects with origins rooted in oral traditions that predate the arrival of Western theatre. Special attention will be devoted to the work of Véronique Basile Hébert, an artist and researcher of Atikamekw Indigenous heritage from Quebec. She is conducting a practice-based research project at UQÀM (Université du Québec à Montréal) that explores the themes of territoriality and decentralisation. This project is part of the broader renaissance of Indigenous theatre currently unfolding in Canada, yet it diverges from mainstream trends by advocating for a radical decentralisation—an ethical engagement grounded in the lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples, rather than in the heart of the metropolis.

Biography

Daniela Sacco teaches Performing Arts Disciplines at the University Iuav of Venice. She was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow (Project ITACA—Intercultural Theatre and Cultural Appropriation, HORIZON 2020) at the University of Milan and the UQAM, Université du Québec à Montréal, where she taught at the École supérieure de théâtre (2018–2019 and 2021–2022). She has received research grants for several projects, and her interests, in addition to decolonial studies, include contemporary reflections on tragedy, the relevance of myth, Aby Warburg's thought, and morphological aesthetics. She is the author of several publications, including monographs, essays and articles in academic journals.

David Calder

Public Spaces and Public Spheres: Performance Infrastructure, Transnationalism, Democracy

Since 2003, the European Commission-funded In Situ platform has provided professional, creative, and financial support to over 300 artists and theatre-makers creating work for public spaces. What began as a collaboration among six cultural programmers has grown into a network of 24 partner organisations across 21 countries. In Situ's festival and residency circuit links major metropolitan areas (e.g., Marseille, Brussels, Copenhagen, Budapest, Prague) to some less likely theatrical hubs (e.g., the much smaller cities of Fredrikstad, Norway and Detmold, Germany, and the Frisian island of Terschelling). The network's transnational mobility programmes have attempted to traverse (while perhaps reifying) the real or imagined East-West European divide. More recently, the In Situ platform has established its European base as a global hub through partnerships with programmers in Burkina Faso, Chile, South Korea, Tunisia, and the United States.

This paper analyses the In Situ network's complex spatiality—its de- and re-centring of the geographies of cultural production for public spaces—and its relationship to the platform's political and civic ambitions. In Situ publications, from evaluation reports to podcasts, explicitly link artistic creation in public space to the health of the public sphere, and even, by extension, to the state of democracy in Europe. Drawing on theatre and performance scholarship on festivals and touring circuits, transnational theories of the (theatrical) public sphere, and recent work on theatre and democracy, I ask what kind of democratic work might be supported by the infrastructures and events of public-space performance. What kind of European public does In Situ assemble? And how might performance infrastructure sustain the link between spatiality and democracy?

Biography

Dr David Calder is Senior Lecturer in Theatre & Performance Studies at the University of Manchester. He is the author of *Street Theatre and the Production of Postindustrial Space: Working Memories* (Manchester University Press, 2019). His essays on performance and public space have appeared in *Theatre Research International*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, *Theatre Journal*, *TDR: The Drama Review*, and several anthologies. His current project explores how queer performances of public space reimagine political community in a contested and dis-integrating Europe.

Diana Damian Martin, Marilena Zaroulia

European Entanglements: cultural politics and performance interventions

In *Thinking Europe Otherwise*, sociologist Manuela Boatcă proposes that in light of the transregional entanglements and international hierarchies colonialism has produced in Europe, we need to 'unlearn received notions of Europe as an unmarked category', and instead, pay attention to how its shifting internal borders operate in relation to historical legacies, but also to the 'experiences of peoples and regions racialised as non-European, non-Western and non-white' (2021:389). Taking Boatcă's conceptualisation as a starting point, we would like to invite participants to join us in a lab exploring modes and methodologies of disentangling Europe centering performances and dramaturgies of Europeanness otherwise.

In the context of EASTAP's focus on decentering, distributing and democratising, taking place in the UK at a time marked by heightened processes of bordering and hostile environments, we are interested in the distribution of affective economies of hate (Ahmed 2004) and disaster nationalism (Seymour 2024) and their distribution across the continent. At the same time, we consider how bounded and racialised conceptions of shared European culture also exclude places and nations peripheral to the EU, whilst also sustaining what Madina Tlostanova calls 'imperial difference' (2007, 2014). Such articulations continue to conceal legacies and lineages that entangle competing articulations of 'Europe' that reintroduce a centre-periphery, local-global politics of marginalisation.

We gather to explore forms of cultural governance and artistic practice that tend to multitudes, extensions and paradoxes. Our intention is to engage entanglements and relations that shape European dramaturgies and performance practices from the perspective of intersections between creolisation, postcoloniality and postsocialism.

Biography

Marilena Zaroulia's research engages with contemporary performance and cultural politics in post-1989 Europe. Her work on performance and migration, national identity and performance, crisis, affect and belonging has appeared in international journals, edited collections as well as in *Performances of Capitalism, Crises and Resistance* that she co-edited (2015). She is currently the Programme Leader of the BA(Hons) Drama and Applied Theatre at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Diana Damian Martin is an educator, writer and researcher interested in political formations that emerge through critical and artistic practices, centering migrancy and border-thinking. She is Senior Lecturer in Performance Studies at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, where is also Programme Leader of the BA (Hons) Performance and Contemporary Arts Programme.

Diana and Marilena are co-editors for the Routledge Series in *European Entanglements: Performance Interventions and Cultural Politics*.

Dolores Beasley

The Hamilton Effect? Democratisation in Casting in Commercial Theatre

Casting without considering the actor's ethnicity is an increasingly accepted practice and its use to make political or social statements is more prevalent than ever. This presentation discusses race-conscious casting using Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton* (2015) as a key example of how the practice is used as a mechanism for providing broader representation in commercial theatre while also contributing to global discussions on race.

Currently most theatrical commercial productions, including those in London's West End preserve, promote and perpetuate white culture. *Hamilton*, a musical about America's colonial past, is told through a multi-racial cast and was conceived to reflect the country's present and future. Its entrance to the musical canon has made audiences, theatre creatives, politicians and academics question the myriad ways to consider casting as a mechanism of providing increased access to opportunity and broader representation on stage. The musical's enduring popularity ensures its place in any exploration of the systemic, structural changes required for inclusiveness in theatres. I propose to use this presentation to share findings gained through interviews, ongoing academic research and personal observations as they relate to issues of democratisation, representation and efforts to increase diversity in the range of voices and perspectives to challenge and inspire audiences with works such as *Hamilton*.

Biography

Dolores Beasley began critiquing plays at age five. A lifetime of theater attendance was only interrupted for four Peace Corps tours and pandemic shut downs. After a 20-year career with NASA she left the USA to obtain a MA in Creative Writing at City, University of London, pursue a PhD at Guildhall School of Music and Drama (project focus: Casting and Underrepresentation of Blacks on the West End and Broadway, 1984-2024) and to attend plays to her heart's content.

Eleni Guini

Heterotopia and democracy in performative space of Angélica Liddell

This paper attempts to approach the issue of democracy in the postdramatic form of the contemporary theatre. (Lehmann). Through the case of theatre director, dramaturg and performance artist, Angélica Liddell we will analyze the role of theatre and performance in social, cultural and political transaction»(cfp).

Through references to her plays, "All the Sky above the Earth (The Wendy Syndrome)" (2013) & "And the Fishes Went to Fight the Men" (2007), we will study how performative space is shaped (according to Erika-Fischer Lichte), and how through this space arises a kind of heterotopia, that is, a spatio-temporal condition between realism and utopia. Her heterotopia denotes political and social conflicts and highlights the dichotomy between reality vs construction, similitude vs diversity. Through her electrifying, terrifying performances, Liddell comments caustically on violence, lack of justice, death and the value of human life, touches on misogyny and the issue of gender submission.

The poetics of violence as a transmutation of real violence (according to Liddell) acquires a realistic and metonymic feature and becomes a kind of manifesto that refers to the humanitarian tragedy and the political passivity of Europe. Liddell's plays testify to her grief in the wake of the violence of today's world while never ceasing to judge it and raise questions about the role of demos. Therefore, within Liddell's performative space, we understand how the performance not only serves as a backdrop but actively shapes the audience's perception, thus pointing out that, according to Juan Mayorga, "the history of stage practices is also a history of the relations between the body and society".

Biography

Eleni is a Doctor of Philosophy and Philology, University of Athens, Ph.D. in French Theatre.

She is teaching at the Open University of Cyprus, (Postgraduate Section), "Theory of Theatre" and "Dramatology". She cooperates as dramaturg with National Theatre of Greece, with Persona Theater Company (<https://persona.gr/gr/about/>) and other troupes. She attends international symposia of Theatrology. She is writing critics & articles for the theater in journals. She is founding member of the Center of Theatre Semiotics (Greece) and she is member of ITI and of EASTAP. Eleni translates from French & Spanish, drama, prose & poetry. She was faculty member in the International Scientific Committee for the Research Project: "Mapping Crisis: Theater on the Contemporary European Stage." She was co-editor & reviewer in journal *Acotaciones* (issue 46,2022). She has also recently published a monograph titled: "Monologues inspired by the Greek ancient tragedy. Signs and intertextuality" (eds. Dodoni, 2022).

Eliane Beaufils

Decenter Ecological Politics to Youth.
The Danish Roleplay Active -action

The ecological disaster presents huge challenges for political adaptation, both now and in the future. As part of the Erasmus + Codename Seedling project (coordinated by Elvira Crois), a group of Danish artists and researchers has developed a role-playing game that aims to stimulate knowledge of power networks and political imagination in relation to environmental issues. This theatrical game radically de-centers authority and authorship by inviting young adults to imagine the world to which they would like to contribute. Each participant chooses the nature of their action (their role) and invents political activities in several stages. The spect-actors gradually walk in the shoes of the people they could be in the future, but also of those who they are now: they reflect on the future “from the present”.

It is first necessary to present the context, the genesis and the unfolding of the theatrical game that emerged from the practice-as-research project. The contribution would then like to examine how such a game opens up the future, whereas young people often fall back into stereotypical patterns of thought. In fact the study may take into consideration the worldbuildings invented by the various groups that have experimented with the device. The worlds imagined by the participants at the start of the game are often close to those of video games. The conception of the roles they endorse afterwards is of particular importance : how do they refer to contemporary power games, do they obey implicit norms ? What potentialities do they open ? The structure of the play and the dynamics of change it allows have finally to be examined in depth : how action and change are presented and designed ? How can the play itself be subject to rule change ? This analysis will hopefully enable to better appreciate the possibilities for political-ecological empowerment offered by the participatory theatrical experience.

Biography

Eliane Beaufils is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University Paris 8. Her research has adopted various focuses on contemporary criticalities and on spectatorial autopoiesis, as in the books *Being-With in Contemporary Performing Arts* (ed. with Eva Holling, Neofelis, 2018), and *Toucher par la pensée. Théâtre critique et résonances poétiques*, Hermann, 2021. Since 2018, she has been researching on the projects Theater facing Climate Change and Stages for a new world (“Scènes pour un monde nouveau”) with Flore Garcin-Marrou. In this context, she has published twenty articles and *Dramaturgies des plantes*, Tangence, n° 132 (online), as well as *L'Écologie en scène. Théâtres politiques et politiques du théâtre*, PUV, 2024.

Elisa Smeraldo

From body to sound: movement sonification
and accessibility in performing arts

Dance performances are usually conceived for sighted audiences, effectively excluding non-sighted and visually impaired people from engaging with this art form. However, the implementation of new technologies can improve their accessibility. This research will explore how movement sonification can create an immersive and interactive experience for blind and visually impaired participants, enabling them to perceive dance beyond visual cues.

The project, which follows a practice-based approach, combines an interactive installation and a laboratory, co-planned with a group of blind and visually impaired participants. The resulting experience will constitute the main case study of my research, for which I will adopt a qualitative approach, integrating participant observation, discursive interviews and focus groups.

The study raises critical and methodological questions:

- How can participatory design principles ensure that accessibility innovations in performing arts are genuinely inclusive?
- What are the ethical implications to consider in the empirical approach of the study?
- How can sonification democratise dance by enhancing its kinetic and rhythmic qualities over the visual aspects?

By presenting this methodological framework, my goal is to engage in a discussion on the role of new technologies in shaping new paradigms of accessibility in performance, on the basis of an active participation and engagement in cultural creativity.

Biography

I'm a PhD student in Heritage Science at the University of Rome Sapienza. My research focuses on the intersection of theatre, cultural heritage and new media. I hold a Master's degree in Cinema, Performance Arts and New Media (University of Turin), and a Bachelor's degree in Literature (University of Genoa).

Elizabeth Fullerton

Decentring the artist to make room for unheard voices: co-creation in the art practice of Rory Pilgrim

The past decade has seen the polyphonic amplification of marginal voices enter the cultural mainstream, reflected in the choice of Venice Biennale participants, or literary and art prize shortlists. At the same time, there has been a strong rise in social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, and environmental justice groups like Extinction Rebellion, which have demonstrated the power of collectivity and non-hierarchical solidarity. My paper will focus on the socially-oriented practice of Rory Pilgrim, who decentres the role of the artist to create powerful multidisciplinary projects in collaboration with often marginalised communities. In his Turner Prize-nominated film *Raft* (2022), for instance, Pilgrim explores the symbol of the raft with volunteers from a mental health charity, weaving together participants' song, dance and poetry with their stories of suffering and survival in the pandemic to produce a polyphonic tapestry. The project was the result of a three-year social research project jointly commissioned by the Serpentine Galleries and London borough of Barking and Dagenham to look at the civic roles art can play in transforming lives. More recently he has worked with inmates at a prison to look at ways that collective listening and sound-making might help to create alternative narratives to imagine more hopeful futures.

Biography

Elizabeth Fullerton is a doctoral researcher at Birkbeck College, University of London, where she is exploring the polyphonic turn in participatory art, as well as looking at applying multi-voiced methodologies to art criticism. A critic, writer and podcaster, she contributes to international publications including *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Art Monthly*, *Art in America*, *ARTnews* and *Art Quarterly* and is the author of *Artrage! The Story of the BritArt Revolution* (Thames & Hudson (2016, 2021).

Ellen Wagstaff

Working 'With': Decentring and Recentring the Practitioner in Applied Theatre Practice

This paper considers and interrogates the position of the 'facilitator' in applied theatre practice, advocating for a decentring and subsequent recentring of the practitioner from a facilitatory role to a more mutual and collaborative role. I begin by interrogating the central prominence of the practitioner when placed in the traditional facilitator role and examining the impact that this positioning can have on the practice that is being undertaken, the relationships that are built, and the work that is created. In this context, I advocate that the practitioner must be decentred in order to mitigate the prominence, power and influence that comes with the position of facilitator. While I advocate for a decentring, however, I do not wish to suggest that the practitioner should withdraw from the practice entirely. Thus, I proceed to consider how a practitioner might be repositioned after they have been decentred; how they might be productively 'recentred'. This recentring seeks to mitigate the practitioner's power and influence, while simultaneously retaining their ability to provide structure and consistency for the participants who take part in applied practices; elements of the practitioner's role that can be seen to be positive and necessary. I argue that a balance can be achieved if the practitioner is repositioned, not at 'the centre' of a practice, but as a 'central part' of that practice. They must be positioned as an equal, interacting subject, a co-creator or collaborator who is able to move between the centre and the margins throughout the course of a project, to make valuable contributions and give guidance constructively, without dominating, taking over or speaking for others.

Biography

Ellen is a CHASE funded doctoral student at the University of Kent. She is the holder of a first-class undergraduate degree, an MA, a PGDE, and three academic achievement awards. Ellen has spent her career so far working with schools, colleges and drama groups as an educator and facilitator, and has a keen interest in participatory work. In line with her current doctoral research which focuses on working across positions of difference in theatre practice, her research interests lie at the intersection between theatre and ethnography with a focus on representation, collaboration and affective practice.

Emma Cox

Forensic Arts, Counter Forensics, Forensic Activism: The Para-Jurisdictions of European Asylum

This presentation is part of a larger study of what I am calling ‘reparative acts’ in which biological remains are imbricated in matters of social justice. The paper describes and theorises the engagement with forensics in expressive and communicative practices concerning migrants’ deaths at the borders of Europe. I identify three distinct, but intermeshed, approaches to representation in this context: (1) forensic arts, (2) counter forensics, and (3) forensic activism. In response to the provocation of ‘decentring, distribution and democratising’, my discussion proposes that the structural withdrawal of state responsibility for maritime migrants in the Mediterranean and lack of a consistent mechanism for managing deaths has led to the politicisation of the knowledge and expertise of those for whom activism would not normally otherwise be a primary purpose, and brought autonomous cohorts – forensic pathologists, local police, coastal communities, survivors – into particular kinds of coherence. What I consider to be reparative action must be situated not just as a range of professional acts and social interactions but also historicised: understood in the context of a legacy of notions of human value and of humanness itself that, as David L. Eng unpacks in *Reparations and the Human* (2025), still demarcate ‘who and what is considered deserving of attention and care, of repair’ (2025, 4). As Eng observes, the ‘political and psychic genealogies of reparation’ established during European colonialism and the Enlightenment ‘continue to determine shifting configurations of the human being and human rights’ (2025, 3). As regimes that operate in structural and economic continuity with European colonialism (M’charek and Casartelli 2019), European migration jurisdictions withhold bodily and juridical appearance from large numbers of irregular (and illegalised) migrants, situating reparative cultural practices, for better or worse, as ‘para-jurisdictions’ of asylum.

Biography

Emma Cox is Reader in Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her work examines migration, memory, and place in performance, visual culture, and medical culture. Her research has appeared in *Theatre Journal*, *Theatre Research International*, *Medical Humanities* and elsewhere. Emma’s books include *Performing Noncitizenship* (2015), *Theatre & Migration* (2014), and *Staging Asylum* (2013). She is co-editor of the interdisciplinary volume, *Refugee Imaginaries: Research Across the Humanities* (2020), and contributing editor of *Performance and Migration* (2021), a video and publishing collaboration. Her forthcoming book is *Reparative Acts: The Work of Biological Remains in Performance, Commemoration, and Medical Culture*.

Esther Criado Valladares

Crisis and Catalan Live Art. Decentralizing the subject, reimagining performance: a case study of “El Conde de Torrefiel”.

The 2008 crisis caused a crisis of bodily presence in Live Art due to drastic cuts to artistic fees. Nevertheless, it triggered new artistic proposals which emerged from necessary survival strategies. In search of new spaces and possibilities, artists shifted their languages and formats (Duran, 2017), which had previously been grounded in the performing arts, towards visual arts references. The emerging reduction of human performers on the stage along with their replacement by other – fee free – means, such as performing installations, theatrical devices, or video-projections, among others, initiated a/n –almost unconscious– critical process with regard to the very concept of the performer as a subject and center of the piece. If Thies-Lehmann (1999) pointed out the decentralization of text within performing arts in the 20th century, Live Art of the 21st century takes the decentering process a step further.

As Gómez (2020), Enrile (2016) and Sánchez (2012) have already concluded, Catalan live artists of the last century took a renewed interest in some of the artistic movements of the 20th Century such as conceptual art, documental theatre, site-specific, situationism or community-based art but in a completely different context, which entails not only a resignification of the aesthetics of the past but also the turn of a subject-centered performativity to a decentralized one.

To explore the paradigm shift of Catalan Live Art after the 2008, some pieces of the company “El Conde de Torrefiel” will be analyzed as a case study, along with their socio- economic context, through audiovisual observation and bibliographic research.

Considering the aforementioned insights on Live Art after 2008, a definition review of Live Art as “bodily co-presence of actors and spectators” (Fischer-Lichte, 2008), and its main assumptions, may be undertaken to better comprehend the features and challenges of the new century.

Biography

Esther Criado works since 2018 at Institut Ramon Llull, currently as Head of Dance and Cinema. She started her doctoral thesis, “Crisis and Live Art in the 21st century in Catalonia” in 2021 at the UOC, where she had worked as lecturer in the Masters in Cultural Management until 2023. Additionally, she worked from 2008 till 2018 as a freelance stage designer, based in Berlin, in various state theatres across Germany. In 2024 she has presented her research work at the CIJNET international Conference (Alicante, Spain) as well as at the PSI international Conference (London, UK).

Eva-Liisa Linder

The Wind of Change: Theatre at the Forefront of the Democratic Turn during Estonian Transition

Estonian theatre functioned as a platform for democratic expression during Estonia's transformation from Soviet occupation to independence in the 1980s-1990s. While dissident theatrical expressions surfaced sporadically already since the 1950s, censorship and the compulsory dominance of Russian and Soviet dramaturgy severely restricted repertoire choices. The cessation of censorship in 1988 enabled the replacing of Russian and Soviet dominance with 60% Western plays. Although this change meant a rapid turn to democratic lifeworld on stages, theatre historiography has largely described the early 1990s as a time of crisis.

This analysis focuses on three significant theatrical movements contesting Soviet hegemony: memory theatre (rising from the early 1980s), the theatre of the absurd (from 1986), and queer theatre (from 1988). Memory theatre broke taboos around national history. Absurdist productions offered grotesque reflections on the authoritarian system. Queer theatre introduced equality, pluralism, and tolerance – democracy's core values. Other politically relevant streams like folklore heritage theatre and feminist productions also contributed to democratising theatrical discourse. Together, these innovative streams brought over 150 socially relevant new plays to Estonia's 1.3 million population during the 1980s-1990s. Though representing a minority of the repertoire, these stagings constituted the most politically significant developments, creating space for alternative voices.

This dramaturgic progression highlighted Jürgen Habermas's concepts of the public sphere and rectifying revolution in post-socialist societies. Using the latter concept, we can explain how Estonian theatre underwent a compressed development of European theatrical trends from decades earlier, evolving from a clandestine forum to an explicit democratic platform. This paper demonstrates how theatrical expression effectively decentred authoritarian narratives, contributing to dismantling the mental Iron Curtain.

Biography

Eva-Liisa Linder is a researcher and lecturer at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. As a PhD candidate in the Studies of Cultures at Tallinn University, she focuses on the theatrical public sphere during Estonia's societal transformation. She has published studies on political theatre in Nordic Theatre Studies and Forum Modernes Theater, with pioneering work on Estonian absurdist and queer theatre. She is a member of an interdisciplinary research group examining Estonian transition culture, and beyond her academic work, contributes as a theatre critic and editor.

Fabienne Mathis

Institutional opening processes - How can the sustainable and structural inclusion of people with disabilities in Swiss theatre organizations and audience succeed?

When it comes to the implementation of inclusive measures in relation to the structural design of cultural institutions and accessibility to their programmes, the Swiss theatre scene is still confronted with the fact that access to culture for people with disabilities is not yet a matter of course, even ten years after the ratification of the UN CRPD (Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA, 2014).

In my dissertation project, I deal with the question of how theatre operations can be made not only accessible but also inclusive. The focus of my interest is therefore not primarily artistic-aesthetic production processes or stagings, but institutions and their organisational procedures, decision-making processes and infrastructures.

My main argument is that organisational cultural change, supportive structural framework conditions (cultural funding/organisational resources) and finally the implementation of suitable measures across different organisational levels are required in order to achieve the sustainable inclusion of people with disabilities.

Biography

Fabienne Mathis has an academic background in social sciences, management and dramaturgy with a broad approach to social and cultural issues from a variety of perspectives. Her professional experience focuses on the organisation, production and promotion of culture, especially theatre. Since summer 2023 she is part of the co-direction at Kleintheater Luzern. Her work focuses on the sustainable design of modern theatre operations, taking into account the inclusion of people with disabilities in operations and audiences, as well as trends in digitalisation on and behind the stage.

Federica Patti

History of OTONI. Online digital performance from mid Nineties till tomorrow

Since the second half of the 1990s, the Internet has fostered the emergence of virtual communities and forms of creative participation (Bazzichelli, 2006; Pizzo, 2021), increasingly inviting users to become co-authors of novel collective experiences. As an evolution of the network, the metaverse (Ball, 2022) is now a highly performative, interactive and community-based ecosystem. It represents a fundamental shift in today's notion of 'being online', redefining the boundaries between physical and virtual, private and collective, human and more than human (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013). Before and after the pandemic, it emerged as a public space, a crucial ecosystem for social experiences, conversations, creative projects and collective interactions. Can it then be conceived as a fifth wall (Steyerl, 2021), a virtual theatron (Del Gaudio, 2020; Laurel, 1991) for the staging of digital performances (Dixon, 2007)?

This paper proposes a range of online 3D digital performances, examining, in particular, the use, in different platforms, of chat and the various systems of interaction, communication and sharing between users as a form of audience engagement, but also as a tool for community building in the context of collective performance experiences. By analysing some historical and contemporary studio cases, with examples starting from Giacomo Verde's experiments (Monteverdi, 2023), through Second Front's online happenings, to some productions supported by the Residenze Digitali project (Patti, 2024), the influence of the chosen technological system on the performative, dramaturgical, participatory and community-building poetics of this kind of OTONI (Boccia Artieri, 2023) will be identified, underlining the dramaturgical importance of UX design in these online digital performative experiences (Norman, 2013; Hassenzahl, 2003). The article aims to define what kind of new empathic pact with the viewer the cases imply, and eventually, as Gene Youngblood (2020) argues, whether these technologies can also be seen as sites of re-socialisation, γυμνάσιον, 'gyms' for the collective construction of conscious communities.

Biography

Federica Patti is an independent curator and critic. Her research focuses on transmedia practices, digital performance, posthuman issues and the metaverse. She is lecturer in multimedia dramaturgy at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts and PhD student at the University of Turin, researching online digital performance and user experience design. She actively collaborates with various institutions (including the Romaeuropa Festival), curating art, science and digital humanities exhibitions. She is a member of IKT - International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art and ADV - Arti Digitali dal Vivo. Since 2020, she has been a tutor of "Residenze Digitali". She composes the newsletter LUNARIO - segnali dal Metaverso every full moon.

Fernanda Raquel

An animist turn in the performing arts – artistic experiences to rethink the Anthropocene

In the face of the ongoing ecological crisis, it is urgent to reconsider the boundaries between the human and the non-human. In contemporary theater and dance, we witness a revival of animism—an attempt to re-enchant a world devastated by the relentless forces of the capitalist system. More than ever, it is necessary to reflect on the multiplicity of life in order to expand our imagination, which has been colonized by hegemonic logics. This shift invites us to move beyond the Anthropocene and to consider the manifestation of a vital force that interconnects all species. Works by artists such as Japanese director and playwright Toshiki Okada—who explores the relationship between the body and its environment to question existing ways of life—and the recent production by the Brazilian collective A Digna, *What if we were whales?*, which explores dreams as a form of resistance, inspired by Indigenous knowledge, contribute to strengthening the dialogue between theory and practice, between conceptual frameworks and artistic experience. The notion of nature as something to be dominated and exploited is no longer sustainable—if, indeed, we wish to continue living in this world. The increasingly frequent climate catastrophes serve as warnings that the very concept of the future is under threat. In this context, the verb to project must be conjugated in the plural and understood as a collective endeavor. Expanding our ways of perceiving what constitutes life is now a political task—one that must be cultivated daily, from the subjective to the social, from the ordinary to the artistic. This work aims to deepen the reflection on the relationship between body and environment in the performing arts, in order to foster an ethical foundation that links human life to all other forms of life, undoing entrenched hierarchies and decentering human primacy.

Biography

Fernanda Raquel is a Brazilian artist and researcher in the field of theatre. She teaches Performing Arts at the Institute of Arts at UNESP. An actress trained at the School of Dramatic Arts (USP), she also holds a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from UNICAMP, as well as a master's and a doctorate in Communication and Semiotics from PUC-SP. She is the author of the book *"Corpo artista – estratégias de politização"* (Artist Body – Politicization Strategies), published by Annablume/FAPESP in 2011, and the co-organizer, alongside Christine Greiner, of the collection *Transcreations between Japan and the West: Activism, Affection Networks, and Creation Processes*, published by Annablume in 2024. She has completed research internships in Tokyo, Japan (2006), and Marseille, France (2019).

Filippos (Philip) Hager

Rehearsing nowness: acting on stage and in the streets during the 2023 protests in Greece

In February 2023 the National Theatre of Northern Greece (NTNG) revived Loula Anagnostaki's last play *To You Who are Listening to Me* (2003) and its opening coincided with a wave of occupations of drama schools and public theatre buildings in Athens and Thessaloniki by drama and other art students protesting a government act that invalidated and devalued their degrees. The banners hanging outside the occupied theatres displayed a drawing of Anagnostaki, while the main slogan of the protests read 'To you who are listening to us'. Fittingly, at the NTNG's production, a similar banner was placed by the entrance to the auditorium echoing the notion that Anagnostaki's play enables, 'the there-and-then of extra-theatrical or historical space-time to march into the here-and-now of the stage and overdetermine what might be possible in it (Tsatsoulis, *The Theory of Possible Worlds and the Plays of Loula Anagnostaki*: 159).

It is this intersection between historical and theatrical space-time that interests me in this paper – particularly as the historical temporality is not, in this case, an elsewhere, but 'time filled full by now-time' (Benjamin, *Selected Writings*: Volume 4, 1938–1940: 395). In this paper, therefore, I ask: to what degree were there historically contingent (but not necessarily intentional) synergies between the production and the movement? How might we read this crossing of the boundaries of the stage as a decentring of theatrical time? How might we read the movement unravelling in the streets and occupied theatre spaces through the lens of the theatrical temporalities offered by the production of NTNG? What kinds of distribution of political ideas and practices were rehearsed in this coincidence that revived Anagnostaki's play exactly twenty years after it was first staged? How might the desire to be listened to constitute both a theatrical act and a demand for democratisation?

Biography

Philip Hager is Assistant Professor of theatre and politics at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His work focuses on performance, cultural memory, urban space, political economies. He has published in national and international journals and edited collections. He is co-editor of *Performances of Capitalism, Crises and Resistance* (Palgrave, 2015) and the special issue 'Dramaturgies of Change: Greek Theatre Now' (*Journal of Greek Media and Culture*, 2017). He is author of *Re-imagining Independence in Contemporary Greek theatre and Performance* (Cambridge Elements, 2023).

Gisela Doria

Dance as Decolonial Practice at Casa de Ensaio – A Reference from the Global South

Founded in 1996 in Campo Grande, Brazil, Casa de Ensaio (Casa) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the artistic, pedagogical, and social development of children and adolescents in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability. Integrating theater, music, dance, and visual arts, Casa prioritizes critical citizenship and community inclusion beyond traditional artistic training. As a dance educator at Casa for eight years, I have employed a methodology that shifts the focus from technical training to body awareness as a form of political resistance.

Grounded in William James' assertion that "the body is the center of the storm, the origin of all coordinates" (1976), this approach reframes dance as a tool of agency. While Western epistemologies have historically dissociated body and mind, Casa's methodology draws on Paulo Freire's concept of critical pedagogy and bell hooks' notion of engaged pedagogy, where education is a practice of freedom and the body is not separate from the learning process. Dance becomes a liberatory practice rooted in lived experience, challenging dominant hierarchies and positioning the body as a site of knowing, resistance, and transformation.

This presentation examines key insights from my pedagogical experience, highlighting challenges—such as resistance to non-technical approaches—and successes in fostering agency through movement. I propose a replicable methodology that integrates theory and practice, positioning body awareness as a democratic and accessible tool that challenges colonial legacies of separation and control. By detaching bodily consciousness from Eurocentric artistic standards, this work argues that dance serves as an accessible social technology reclaiming freedom of movement, perception, and relational being. Situated at the intersection of academic research and artistic praxis, this study reinforces dance as a site of re-existence in the Global South, expanding possibilities for embodied agency and social transformation in structurally precarious contexts.

Biography

Gisela Dória is a Brazilian dance artist, educator, and researcher based in Lisbon since 2018. With a background in classical ballet and contemporary dance, she holds a degree in Journalism, a Master's from the University of São Paulo (USP), and a PhD in Performing Arts from the University of Campinas. Certified in Klein Technique™ and Gyrokinesis®, her work integrates somatic practices, critical pedagogy, and embodied research.

She is the author of *Poética de Sem Lugar* (2013) and co-author of *Cia Carne Agonizante* (2018), and has presented at international conferences on theater, dance, and performance. Her postdoctoral research at USP explored Choreographic Haikus, and she continues to collaborate with the University of Lisbon's Center for Theater Studies.

Giulia Sala

Barong and Tourism in Bali: decentralizing tradition from ritual to stage

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the changes that have affected the performance of Barong in Bali, a centre of global tourism and the birthplace of this tradition.

The Barong, a dance that originated from the Hindu ritual tradition, was used to represent the conflict between the beneficent and the evil principles, embodied by the masks of Barong and Rangda. Over time, the Barong dance has evolved to be performed in various settings, adapting to new forms of entertainment in which variations have been introduced in the narration and in the structure. These changes can be interpreted as a decentralisation of Balinese arts: the Barong as an artistic expression associated with the sacred dimension, is moving away from a single, centralised authority, once represented by the religious institution and the royal courts, to allow it to be modified and practised in new and different contexts. In the last century, Balinese religious and community life has come into contact with a globalised world that has chosen Bali as a symbol of a tropical paradise, sometimes enhancing and sometimes flattening its cultural traditions in favour of commercialising places and artistic products. This process has also allowed for a democratisation of the Barong phenomenon, favouring greater accessibility and redistribution of cultural heritage through a more numerous and inclusive participation of a wider and diversified global community. This paper will analyse these transformations, investigating how artistic innovation, professional needs, the relationship with the sacred and the conservation of cultural heritage interact in contemporary Bali.

Biography

Giulia Sala is a PhD student in Arts, History and Society at the Department of Arts of the University of Bologna. Her research project explores Barong dance in Bali, focusing on the dividing line between sacred and touristic performances. In June 2024, she continued her academic research with fieldwork in Bali, to document the activities of Barong dancers. Since 2024, she has been a member of the editorial staff of the journal 'Antropologia e Teatro'. In 2022, she published the article "Il Barong turistico: innovazione e tradizione" in the magazine 'AsiaTeatro'. Her academic interests include anthropology, Asian theatre and tourism.

Goran Petrovic

Choreographies of Dissent: Student Movements and the Performance of Political Change in Belgrade

This paper explores student protests in Belgrade across three pivotal moments—1968, 1996, and 2024—through the lens of transformation, disruption, and identification. These protests, shaped by performative acts of resistance, serve as spaces for political reimagination, where bodies, voices, and movements converge to challenge authoritarianism, corruption, and systemic injustice. The 1968 student protests in Yugoslavia echoed global movements questioning entrenched political and ideological orders, directly confronting centralised authority. In 1996, protests sparked by electoral fraud mobilised strategies of disruption and collective dissent, reshaping democratic aspirations. The 2024 protests unfold in the context of deep political crisis, addressing corruption, authoritarianism, and the future of democracy in Serbia. These latest protests move beyond traditional resistance, experimenting with new forms of collective organisation that carve out space for decentralised power, democratised political participation and political change. Protesters employ a variety of performative tactics to disrupt established political dynamics, shifting them from rigid hierarchies to more fluid, horizontal forms of engagement. In doing so, they blur the boundaries between activism, theatre, and public space. The protest spaces themselves become creative arenas of identification, where the encounters between diverse social groups generate new possibilities for democratic politics. This paper draws on theories of performance, social movements, and democracy to position Serbia's protest performances within a broader transnational network of struggle, suggesting that student uprisings act as laboratories for decentralised, agonistic democratic action. Through this framework, it highlights both the transformative potential and the inherent limitations of such movements, offering a fresh perspective on the evolving nature of political resistance.

Biography

Goran Petrovic Lotina is a Lecturer at the Sciences Po: The Paris Institute of Political Studies and CU Louvain in Belgium, and a researcher at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. His expertise focuses on the political dimension of performance, exploring how everyday actions, civil movements, and artistic expressions can drive societal change. His latest publication, edited with T. Aiolfi, is *Performing Left Populism* (2023).

Grethe Melby

Places - or “topoi” - in theatre criticism

In my presentation, I look at theatre criticism as a rhetorical text where the purpose is to convince the reader that a performance is “good” or “bad» or possesses other qualities. Most reviews contain a description of the performance, which in turn constitutes a “topos” for further reflection. The word topos originally means “place” and in rhetoric we talk about topos (plural topoi) when we talk about from where the speaker derives his arguments. In addition to performance descriptions as the most common topos of criticism, reflections are also drawn from other “places” - whether it is the critic’s personal experiences, theatre history, more general historical references, or current events. How do these places work? The material I examine is from a corpus of texts I have built up through the work on my PhD-research, studying the evolvement of BIT Teatergarasjen – Bergen Internasjonale Teater in Bergen between 1984 and today. The aim is to show how critics place themselves and how their rhetoric reflects their understanding of theatre as well as their own role as theatre critics, and how that again influences their critical argument.

Biography

Grethe Melby, a UiB PhD candidate, researches BIT Teatergarasjen’s rhetorical strategies, tracing its development from local festival to international institution. Her MA in Media Studies (UiB, 2005) explored intellectual property rhetoric. A practicing arts and theatre critic for Norwegian publications like Bergens Tidende, she connects academic inquiry with professional engagement. Melby participates in UiB’s Research Groups on Rhetoric, Democracy and Public Culture, and Theatre History and Dramaturgy, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue. Her work bridges critical analysis of theatre with broader discussions of public discourse and cultural production.

Gustavo Vicente

Decentering dance historiographies:
nomadic poetics in Portugal

Based on the critical analysis of the performance *Nome de Filme* [Film Name] by Bibi Dória (2023), in this communication, I will begin by identifying the growing presence of a set of migrant artists whose work has been manifested marginally to the historical chain of contemporary dance in Portugal. To delve deeper into the effects of this “marginal” presence, I develop the notion of geodance to refer to the canonical forces that seek to establish cause-and-effect relationships between artistic practices and the sociocultural legacy of the territory where they arise – going on to acknowledge the specific contours of the Portuguese case.

It is through this mapping exercise that I reinforce the idea of the emergence of a nomadic practice – for the definition of which I resort to the thought of Rosi Braidotti – which has been occupying a space of counter-memory and resistance to the processes of epistemological sedimentation of a possible genealogy of dance in Portugal. In this context, I stress the relevance of the political positioning around topical issues (such as decolonization) and the interdisciplinary nature of these proposals, addressing the consequent need to look at contemporary dance from a transversal perspective to the study of performing arts.

The viewpoint that guides my line of thought is that of the involved spectator, particularly around Bibi Dória’s performance, thus trying to situate the place from which I see things. Not only to be able to offer me as a correspondent of that same primordial movement of nomadic wandering but also to open other possibilities of listening and developing cognitive sensibilities regarding the current poetics of territorial emancipation in Portugal.

Biography

Gustavo Vicente is a teacher, researcher, performer, and artistic director. Professor at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon, where he lectures on Performance Studies, Contemporary Dance, and Eco-performance. Researcher at the Centre for Theatre Studies, where he coordinates the group Discursive Practices in Performing Arts. Member (former co-convener) of the Choreography & Corporeality Working Group (IFTR). Member of the Executive Board of *Sinais de Cena*: performing arts and theatre studies journal. He began his artistic career in 2001, gaining broad experience both in performing arts and cinema.

Ileana Gherghina

Decentring actor training to include second language English actors: experimenting with Shakespearean sonnets

My research looks at how we can decenter actor training for the inclusion of second language actors, with a particular focus on Shakespeare. Being still very much at the centre of theatrical tradition, British Shakespeare is a complex, multi-faceted, authoritative national institution, an excellent export product and a very efficient means to promote cultural UK. There are numerous Shakespeare acting courses, delivered at conservatoires and acting schools or happening under the umbrella of institutions such as The RSC or The Globe. Such courses focus on passing on a certain wisdom of performing the Bard, with a focus on style and poetry: mastering the iambic pentameter whilst navigating the intricate tissue of words and sounds.

With my project *The Bard is a Foreigner*, I enquire how second language English actors can work with Shakespearean sonnets. My aim is to understand how actor training/working methods can be decentred to allow more inclusivity for the second language speaker. The premise of my work is that instead of seeing the actors' second language as an obstacle or something that needs to be "perfected," (drawn therefore towards a central-ized standard/style of speaking or performing), I see the actor's use of the second language English as part of their individual artistry, which should be creatively forged into the Shakespearean verse. Instead of expecting all actors to perform according to native English norms (in terms of pronunciation, tone, rhythm, performing style, etc.), the type of decentering I propose recognizes that second language actors might bring diverse linguistic qualities that are equally valid, innovative and illuminating in performance. I work against expectations that actors should conform to a specific set of vocal and physical norms associated with the native-level mastery of the English language. Therefore, I seek to develop alternative masteries by applying creative strategies pertaining to performance art (rather than theatre/acting) to I articulate working methods that deconstruct and decenter rather than center and perfect. In my paper, I will illustrate how by employing performance art, actions and interventions, I allow second language actors to loosen up the straitjacket of the centralizing standard, making room for themselves and their ways of speaking within the fixed form of the Shakespearean sonnets; cracking up, expanding the confines of the sonnets to make the second language actors comfortable working with the texts.

Biography

Ileana trained as a theatre actor and director (in Romania and the UK) and has also embraced performance art and live art. She is currently a PhD researcher in Theatre Studies at the University of Birmingham and The Shakespeare Institute. She is co-founder of Nu Nu Theatre and curator of LAPER (Live Art and Performance Group) UK. Some of Ileana's most recent commissions have been for University of Bristol (the video project *Bread of Bristol* and *Learnign Second Language English Through Theatre-Making*), video/performance work for the International Multimedial Art Festival - IMAF 2020 (Serbia), Shinano Primitive Sense Art Festival (Japan) and Performance Køkkenet (Norway), The Gallery Art Factory Flox Kirschau, Germany, Simultan Art Festival Timisoara (Romania), HighFest International Performing Arts Festival (official selection) Yerevan, Armenia, Modern Art Oxford, Squash and Stretch Book launch, The Vestibules Gallery, Bristol.

Ioanna Solidaki

Reconsidering Decentring: The 'tiny' and the 'breach in time', for a dramaturgy of resistance.

Olivier Neveux observes that there is no form that we could generalise as political theatre (2019). Two proposals from his study on the art of theatre are worth highlighting: the first pertains to the 'tiny', which redirects our attention towards details, while the second involves a 'breach in time' in the theatre, eroding the compactness of the world. For Neveux, these two notions have a utopian quality as a new form of resistance. He observes that the infinitesimal (Abensour, Adorno, Benjamin) activates the notion of lack and creates a dialectic between presence and absence, between the visible and the unseen, and thus "deepens the absence" of truth.

Today, artists with political aspirations are rather explicit than implicit; Milo Rau is one example, with a radical approach, theoretically and dramaturgically informed. By contrast, Christoph Marthaler's approach is implicit, as he criticises any form of imposed power; similarly, he prefers to allow the invisible to be discovered. Yet both artists seek a way of conceiving theatre and opera that opposes compactness and hierarchisation, by using audiovisual composing techniques that decenter the spectator's attention. This reminds us that the concept of decentring still concerns movement, transformation and resistance (Gallet et al., 2024).

Exploiting examples by Marthaler's and Rau's performances as well as further references from Rancière (2018), Citton (2010, 2021), Holloway (2012) and Haraway (2016, 2019), I would like to question the possibilities of a dramaturgy of resistance, in theatre and opera, through the notions of the 'tiny' and the 'breach in time'.

Biography

Ioanna Solidaki is filmmaker, dramaturg and member of the Centre of Theatre Studies of the University of Lausanne (CET-UNIL). Curator of the current exhibition at UNIL, "Marthaler's Theatre", she is finalising a PhD thesis on Christoph Marthaler's staging. She has a Master in Classical Studies and Anthropology (UNIL). She also studied filmmaking (NYU), dramaturgy (UNIL-Manufacture), musical composition with Jacques Demierre (HEMU Jazz). Her research fields include contemporary theatre and dramaturgy, musical theatre and opera. Her publications concern Ch. Marthaler, M. Rau, Al. Doublet, political theatre. A topic from her PhD research was presented at the IFTR, Music Theater Group, Reykjavik 2022.

Jasper Delbecke

Decentring Theatre in Flanders. The Case of the Royal Flemish Theatre and KVS < > Congo

This paper examines the Royal Flemish Theatre's (KVS) pioneering efforts to decentre theatre in Flanders by engaging with Belgium's colonial legacy through long-term collaborations with Congolese artists and institutions. Beginning in the early 2000s, KVS initiated a trajectory of cultural exchange with Kinshasa, aiming to redefine the role of a city theatre in a postcolonial context. While these initiatives marked a significant shift from the dominant aesthetics of the "Flemish Wave," they also exposed persistent power imbalances in authorship, representation, and resource distribution. Through case studies such as "Missie" (2007) and "Coup Fatal" (2014), the paper critically reflects on the complexities of postcolonial engagement in the performing arts. Drawing on the existing work of scholars and critics, this paper argues that genuine decentralisation requires more than symbolic gestures—it demands structural transformation and reciprocal collaboration. The KVS <> Congo case thus serves as a lens to interrogate the challenges and possibilities of decolonising cultural institutions in Flanders and beyond.

Biography

Jasper Delbecke is a doctor-assistant at LUCA Campus Ghent and a member of LUCA's Research Unit Imagination & Language. As an art scholar, Delbecke's scholarly work attests to a curiosity about how the arts deal with past events and the politics of representation of personal, local, national, or global histories. From this scholarly interest, he has dealt in his research with innovative forms of documentary theatre, new modes of storytelling, the format of the lecture performance and the conceptualisation of (para-)fictive exhibitions or museums. He published on these topics in *Performance Research*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, *Performance Philosophy and Theatre and Performance Design*.

Jorge Loureiro Figueira

The revolution mixtapes: precariat theatre plays in Portugal since 2010

In 2024, on the fifty years of the carnation revolution, several shows revived the fear and hope of the 25th of April. How do they revive today's terrors and illusions? Today it is almost impossible to find plays that critically address the limitations of our way of life. The maximum level of thought shown on stage is archaeological, in political plays about the memory of struggles; ironic, in satirical performances of collage, parody and somewhat snobbish quotations; or voyeuristic, in poetic texts about marginal communities. In all modalities, artists and spectators emerge as the good guys. A theater of ideological confirmation, even if it seems irreverent, does not feed anyone's critical spirit. Voting and participation are the two poles of civic practice, if we exclude abstention and bombism, which allow us to imagine democracy as a viable solution; and the theater is one of the few places from which you can see these poles at the same time — and what lies beyond them. This is the perseverance that, after all, has revitalized Portuguese theater since 2010, by recovering the origin myths of the current democratic regime. Theater did this by transmitting the idea of common good (in the form of the legacy of the 1974 revolution) where there was almost only the idea of individual oppression (in the form of the neoliberal creed). In this paper we compare the formal strategies of shows that, through simulations, inventories and playlists, recall the revolution and expose democracy.

Biography

Jorge Loureiro Figueira (Nazaré, 1973) is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra, with a research focus on dramaturgy made in Brazil and Portugal. He was coordinator of the Post-Graduation in Dramaturgy at ESMAE (Porto), theatre critic for the newspaper *Público* and resident playwright at *Teatro* (Coimbra). He wrote the plays *As Sete Vidas da Argila*, *À Espera de Beckett ou quaquaquaquá*, *Cassandra de Balaclava*, *Xmas qd Kiseres* and *O Espantalho Teso*.

Jonas Schnor

Infinite Ends: From Posthuman to Posthumous Dramaturgies in the 21st Century

Across the environmental and social crises of the 21st century, an intensification of ends can be observed: species extinction, ecosystemic collapse and the ensuing disintegration of human and nonhuman worlds. These environmental ends are currently exacerbated by changing global power structures, a (re)turn to political forces that devalue ecology, democratic infrastructures and indigenous communities and landscapes. How are the performing arts responding to this global performance of de-democratisation and de-ecologisation?

In this paper, I will address such responses by tracing a development in the European field of performing arts from posthuman to posthumous dramaturgies. Posthumous dramaturgies are concerned with durational aspects of death and disappearance and exercise ways of living with ends not as climactic endpoints but as never-ending and never-finalised processes of ending. Here, I turn to two recent Danish performances, *Orfeo* (2023) by Sort/Hvid and *Solastalgia* (2024) by Madeleine Kate McGowan, that in different ways operationalise a necrocentric attunement; an attunement towards the continual aspect of death – towards the infinity of finitude, so to speak – as well as the ongoing processes of mourning and reworlding following in the wake of loss. In dialogue with critical life studies (Weinstein and Colebrook 2017) and queer death studies (Lykke 2022), I will argue that these posthumous dramaturgies harbour regenerative potentials precisely by problematising the life-death distinction and decentering perspectives on what is assumed dead, absent and non-agential. This regenerativity, I will argue, has to do with making what has – or will have – ended come alive in the ongoingness of the present as a way of redistributing life from the perspective of death – not as its ultimate horizon but as what will always-already have happened.

Biography

Jonas Schnor (they/he) is a postdoctoral researcher in theatre and performance studies at The Research Centre for Visual Poetics, University of Antwerp, and part of the international research project *Performing Ends: a theoretical-methodological inquiry on posthumous dramaturgy*. They obtained their PhD in 2022 from The Centre for Performance Philosophy, University of Surrey, with the thesis *Microdramaturgy. Between Practice and Event*. Their research focuses on temporalities of performance, post-anthropocentric ends, collective modes of creation in dance and performance, relational and embodied dramaturgy, critical theory and accompanying research.

José Maria Vieira Mendes

Who's my friend? 'Participation' in Lucy McCornick's, *Lucy & Friends*

In the December 2024 issue of Harper's Magazine, art critic and culture writer Dean Kissick published an essay entitled 'The Painted Protest: How Politics Destroyed Contemporary Art,' in which he laments the loss of an artistic vision that once thrived on imagination, contrasting it with the current trend of art dedicated to "questions of equity and accountability" and the amplification of "the voices of the historically marginalized." The essay's rhetoric assumes an antagonism between two seemingly incompatible artistic eras and ideologies—a perspective that, while accurately capturing certain artistic movements and performances, simultaneously overlooks or excludes works that actively respond to and challenge this trend. The so-called 'social turn' has also been criticized by theorist such as Claire Bishop, Garcia Düttmann, Irit Rogoff or Jacques Rancière, a.o., who have been distancing themselves from an epistemological frame, under the guise of Brecht or Debord, that has taken hold of the concept of 'participation'.

Through an analysis of Lucy McCormick's *Lucy & Friends* (2022–24), this paper explores how imagination remains a powerful force in contemporary performing arts and how discursive polyphony—often presumed lost—continues to thrive in performances that engage with questions of equity and accountability without being constrained by them. By expanding the concept of participation, we examine McCormick's notions of 'friendship' and 'participation' in this work, as well as her ability to reject simplistic dualisms that oppose separation and proximity, authenticity and fiction, control and free will. In doing so, we push the notion of participation beyond the 'commonly agreed principles of democratic participation and representation through institutions' (Rogoff, 2005), reframing its relationship with politics, as we highlight McCormick's paradoxical and humorous feminist engagement with the mythologies of both solo and group performance.

Biography

José Maria Vieira Mendes is an assistant professor at the School of Arts and Humanities - University of Lisbon, Department of Germanic Studies, director of the Post-graduate course Theatre and Performance Studies and a researcher at Theatre Studies Centre. He has published 'One Thing Is Not the Other. On Theatre and Literature' (2016; 2nd revised edition 2022), three volumes of his plays, a fictional diary ('Arroios. Diary of a Diary', and several papers.

José Pedro Sousa

On the Democratic Road: Queer Stages of the Portuguese Revolution

Theatre and performance played a crucial yet understudied role in shaping Portuguese democracy following the Carnation Revolution. This paper, part of the FCT-funded project Performance and Theatre during the Ongoing Revolutionary Process (<https://doi.org/10.54499/2023.10644.25ABR>), explores how queer identities navigated the tension between revolutionary ideals and enduring conservative values, highlighting the role of theatre in both decentring and reinforcing dominant narratives.

Despite aspirations for liberation, LGBTQIA+ struggles were often sidelined in favour of broader political change. This tension is reflected in the scarcity and fragmentation of archival traces—a 1975 newspaper advertisement for Gay Sweatshop productions in London; a highly criticised Portuguese production of Elizabeth Huppert's *The True Story of Jack the Ripper*; the intricate production story of the play *Monsanto*, written by Portuguese playwright Bernardo Santareno and staged in Lisbon in 1977 under the direction of Augusto Boal. Oral testimonies from theatre practitioners further highlight the difficulty of addressing queer themes within the revolutionary context, as well as the challenges of enunciating those memories today.

Drawing on archival research and interviews, this paper examines how theatre functioned as a site of negotiation, resistance, and exclusion during the Portuguese Revolution. By analysing the representation of queer identities on stage during Portugal's transition to democracy, it interrogates how theatre redistributed agency in cultural practices in times of political upheaval. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on the intersection of performance, identity, and political transformation.

Biography

José Pedro Sousa is a researcher at the Centre for Theatre Studies, School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon, and Lecturer in Portuguese Theatre History at Universidade Aberta (UAb, Portugal). He is the Principal Investigator of the FCT-funded project Performance and Theatre during the Ongoing Revolutionary Process (<https://doi.org/10.54499/2023.10644.25ABR>), which examines the role of performative arts in shaping democracy during the Portuguese Revolution of 1974–1975. He is section co-convenor of “From the Archives” in the European Journal of Theatre and Performance and co-convenor of the IFTR working group “Digital Humanities in Theatre Research”.

Joseph Dunne-Howrie

Staging Cultural Decline: The War on Woke at the Battle of Ideas

The Battle of Ideas is an annual political festival organised by the libertarian thinktank the Academy of Ideas. It has become a key event for the radical right to build and disseminate a reactionary discourse through political performativity. Despite its outward commitment to political pluralism, all participants are united in their contempt for ‘woke.’ The dramaturgy stages the voice of the demos as a mode of resistance against tyrannical woke culture to an audience who are performatively configured into a populist codification of ‘the people.’ The extremist performativity at the festival purposefully portrays discursive forms that do not conform to the ‘patriarchal aesthetics of truth’ (Scrimmer 2023, 129) within logocentricism as a threat to conservative morality. The war on woke seeks to illicit fears in the population that the West’s ‘true’ culture is being contaminated by decadent ideologies (Alston 2023) – particularly trans identity, decolonisation, and environmental activism – which destabilise naturalised expressions and experiences of identity, family, work, and leisure. Drawing on my experiences of attending the Battle of Ideas in 2022 and 2023 as part of my research into the free speech culture wars, I analyse how the war on woke is performed in the ‘populist style’ (Aiolfi 2023, 43) through a choreography of scripted debates. I also consider how the threat of identity politics and leftwing censorship is reiteratively performed to excessive degrees by figures like the comedian Graham Linehan and GBNews presenters to dramaturgically reverse the cultural decline of western liberal democracies.

Biography

Dr Joseph Dunne-Howrie is the MFA Programme Director at Rose Bruford College where he lectures in performative writing and practice research methodologies. His primary research interests are theatricality and extremist politics; performance and postdigital culture; immersive, interactive and participatory theatre; and performance documentation. Joseph is currently working on two books: the monograph *Staging Free Speech: British Culture Wars and the Battle for Representation and Performance and Postdigital Extremism: Conspiracy, Influencers, and Gaming* with Tom Drayton. Joseph is a convener for the TaPRA Performance and New Technologies working group and an associate artist of the theatre company Hydrocracker and the Berlin School of VR.

Katerina Karra

Policy Efforts in Advancing Regional Theatre in Greece

This paper explores the evolution of state policies aimed at decentralizing theatre in Greece, focusing on the establishment of regional and municipal theatres as part of broader efforts to decentre, distribute, and democratise cultural production. Addressing the key question —What are the known efforts of policy to make regional theatre a reality? — this paper traces initiatives from the early 20th century to the present, analyzing various state-driven methods.

The first major attempt was “Arma Thespidos” during the Metaxas dictatorship, inspired by Italy’s “Carri di Tespi”, which sought to bring theatre to the provinces through a mobile theatrical unit. After the fall of the junta in 1974, a new “Arma Thespidos” was introduced, aiming to reconnect regional audiences with theatre. This was followed by the emergence of “semi-state theatres”, which blended public and private support to sustain artistic production outside Athens. The most significant policy shift came in the 1980s with the establishment of “Regional and Municipal Theatres” (Dimotika Perifereiaka Theatra, or DIPETHE), which provided state funding and infrastructure to permanently anchor theatre in regional centers. These institutions, still active today, represent the most structured effort to ensure theatrical accessibility across Greece.

By examining these state-led interventions, this paper evaluates their effectiveness in fostering sustainable artistic ecosystems, strengthening local cultural identity, and ensuring equitable access to theatre. Finally, it considers whether a new model could emerge to further support regional theatre, adapting past efforts to contemporary cultural and economic realities. Situating Greek regional theatre within broader European trends, this paper highlights the critical role of policy in shaping a more balanced and inclusive national arts landscape.

Biography

Katerina Karra is a faculty member in the Department of Theatre Studies at the University of Athens. Born in Germany, she was educated in Thessaloniki, Athens, and Berlin and has been based in Athens since 2000. She earned her PhD in Greek theatre history with distinction in 2010. Her research interests encompass 20th-century Greek theatre, local theatre, criticism, and popular genres. She has published extensively and received several state scholarships. In November 2024, she spearheaded an international conference in Chania, Greece, dedicated to theatre in the region.

Keiu Virro

Theatre for Diverse Young Audiences: Accessibility as Cultural Participation

This paper examines the role of professional theatre for young audiences with diverse abilities. While theatre has long been recognized as a space for storytelling and social engagement, its accessibility remains uneven, often excluding neurodivergent children and those with physical or sensory disabilities. Through a review of accessible theatre practices and their impact, this study interrogates the role of inclusion of the participation in the theatre.

How do we define and facilitate participation in theatre for all? Can accessibility to theatre itself be framed as a basic human right? Beyond audience experience, the study also considers the ripple effects on caregivers, performers, and theatre institutions, questioning how structural change can embed accessibility as a foundational principle rather than a marginal concern.

By synthesizing research and case studies in Estonian theatre, this paper highlights both progress and persistent gaps in the field, advocating for policies that position inclusive theatre not as an accommodation but as an essential element of cultural production. Ultimately, this discussion contributes to broader debates on the democratisation of culture, asking how theatre can help not only with giving opportunities for positive impacts, but how it contributes to societal values connected to rights for the culture as the basic human rights for children.

Biography

Keiu Virro is a Junior Research Fellow and PhD student at Tallinn University’s School of Governance, Law, and Society, specializing in accessible theatre events. With an academic background in semiotics, cultural studies, and change management, her research explores the intersection of theatre, inclusion, and cultural policy. Beyond academia, she has extensive experience in cultural governance, crisis communications, and journalism, having served as a counsellor to the Deputy Mayor of Tallinn for Culture and worked in national media. Their work bridges research and practice, advocating for theatre as a democratic and inclusive space for diverse young audiences.

Kristýna Ilek

Dramaturgy and Healthy Creative Practices: Reimagining Working Conditions, Power Dynamics and Care

In the precarious landscape of contemporary theatre and performance-making, questions of power dynamics, access to support structures, and the distribution of resources are deeply intertwined with creative practice. Creative labour demands vulnerability yet is often accompanied by socio-economic precarity. This paper explores how these factors shape working conditions within theatre and performance-making on the island of Ireland, interrogating the extent to which artistic labour can be distributed to foster equity, sustainability, and collective care. Drawing on interviews with directors, dramaturgs, stage managers, producers, and theatre-makers working across the island of Ireland, this study investigates the mechanisms through which creative professionals navigate these challenges within rehearsal rooms.

Using dramaturgy as both a discipline and a practice, this paper explores relationships within creative teams and examines how artistic goals can be achieved without compromising the well-being of those involved. Dramaturgy occupies a contested position within the creative landscape – it is frequently overlooked as an unnecessary expense in constrained production budgets and is often implicitly embedded into the responsibilities of directors, stage managers, and other creative team members. Yet, beyond its traditional literary function, dramaturgy plays a vital role in bridging aesthetic ambition with socio-economic realities, acting as a mediator between creative vision and the material conditions of production.

This study highlights the capacity of dramaturgy to facilitate fair collaboration, redistribute creative agency, and foster viable working conditions within contemporary performance-making. It argues that dramaturgy is uniquely positioned to address systemic precarities and foster healthier, more sustainable working environments, whether formally recognised or included within other roles. Through the lens of dramaturgy, this paper examines creative processes in which theatre-makers resist systemic precarities through collective strategies. Ultimately, it seeks to uncover rehearsal-room practices that challenge systemic inequalities while maintaining artistic integrity.

Biography

Kristýna Ilek (she/her) is a PhD candidate at Queen's University Belfast, supported by the Department of Economics Studentship. She researches working conditions, care, and power relations in the performing arts with a focus on their impact on creative processes on the island of Ireland. Her work also examines dramaturgical practices within collaborative artistic environments. As a Teaching Assistant and Peer Mentor at School of Arts, English and Languages at Queen's University Belfast, she guides students in developing critical thinking and academic skills. Additionally, Kristýna has experience as a freelance dramaturg and is a creative producer of European art collective Dare to Care Art.

Leonardo Mancini

Dante 'round the corner': traces and perspectives of an itinerant theatrical laboratory (Turin 2024)

The proposal aims to present the methodology and the results of a recent laboratory experience, organised by the Teatro Stabile di Torino and by the Department of Humanistic Studies of the University of Turin, which took place in the city of Turin, Italy, in 2024, in the context of a broader initiative promoted by the Municipality, entitled 'Culture round the corner'. Conceived as an open, shared, experience, the laboratory intended to develop a communitarian re-discovery of Dante's "Divine Comedy" through a series of 'decentred' meetings in different cultural and community hubs of the city. Animated by actors trained at the Teatro Stabile di Torino, with the scientific support of scholars of Italian literature and Theatre Studies, the project intended to promote activities on Dante, through also a more 'physical' approach to the text, which could be adapted to the presence and to the reality of the very different backgrounds of the participants (according per age, religion, language etc.). The reflections, exercises and discussions which emerged, shared with the participants, were therefore conceived as tools to imprint the reading of the Poem with thematic revisitations that could give rise to connections with the contemporary reality. In this sense, Dante's text, along with its universal message and its rhythmic structure, has served as a living theatrical 'script', experienced in non-canonical theatrical stages, through a series of acted and improvised 'scenes' and 'actions'. Synthetising and sharing the results of this experience with the participants of the 2025 EASTAP conference in London, I would look forward to present and discuss the strategies and the results of this project, in order to further and critically develop, locally and internationally, alive forms of collaboration among cultural institutions and citizens, with the main goal of creating new bridges between theory and practice, reducing distances among cultural 'operators', scholars and spectators.

Biography

Leonardo Mancini (Milan, 1987) is Associate Professor in Theatre Studies at the Department of Humanistic Studies at the University of Turin, Italy. His research focuses on declamation and theatre academies in Italy and in France through the XIX and the XX centuries, acting techniques, and, more recently, theatre anthropology. Among his publication, he has published the monographs Carmelo Bene: fonti della poetica (Mimesis, 2020), Luigi Rasi. La declamazione come scienza nuova (Mimesis 2021), and he has curated the critical edition of the early XVII century play *La Gonzaga* by Gabriele Bertazzolo (Il Rio, 2023).

Lily Climenhaga

The Dramaturgy of Republic: Representation(al) Democracy and the Wiener Festwochen

On May 17, 2024, Swiss-German theatre-maker Milo Rau opened his first season of the Wiener Festwochen with the declaration of the Freie Republik Wien, the Free Republic of Vienna. This self-proclaimed republic, carefully situated by Rau and his dramaturgs as both separate and part of Vienna, included a Council of the Republic – a voice of the city. The council consists of both “honorary members” (celebrity figures notably absent at the festival) and “citizen members” (current residents of Vienna). In 2024, the citizen members gathered for Hearings in which they discussed the festival’s responsibilities, shape, transformations, and place in present.

“The Dramaturgy of Republic” will uncover and explore the tensions between the presentation of the Festwochen’s institutional identity as a new sort of democratic festival and the inherently undemocratic reality of curating a large-scale cultural institution.

On the one side, it will consider the Festwochen’s status as an established institution of high culture with an accepted top-down hierarchy. It will also look at Rau as an institutional leader who firmly subscribes to the German model, where the artistic director’s artistic and political profile becomes that of the institution. On the other, it will engage with the presentation (its institutional dramaturgy) of the festival as a democratic space, maintaining a critical awareness that the Hearings and even the Council itself is highly curated. Looking at the 2024 Hearings and the resulting “Vienna Declaration”, I will look at how this Council was presented as a voice of the people within the festival, while also questioning how a festival that claims horizontality and an interest in decentering power can also maintain existing hierarchies? Did the Council’s 2024 involvement impact the curatorial and programmatic decisions of 2025? Is democracy at the Wiener Festwochen a foundational pillar or an aesthetic?

Biography

Lily Climenhaga (she/they) completed a dissertation about Milo Rau and IIPM in a joint degree between the University of Alberta and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität and co-edited Theater’s special edition on Milo Rau in 2021. Lily is completing the FWO-funded postdoctoral project “Institutionalized Resistance: Milo Rau’s NTGent Period” (1290323N) at Universiteit Gent and will begin the SSHRC-funded postdoctoral project (756-2025-0335) “Engaging Institutions: Changing Institutional Dramaturgies in Flanders and Germany” at Universiteit Gent and Freie Universität Berlin in December 2025.

Lisa Celsi

Spectatorship and the Right to Appear: Exploring the Political Dimensions of Watching

This paper explores the role of the spectator as a political actor, questioning whether theatre contributes to democracy solely through its creative or participatory practices, or whether the act of spectating itself can be inherently political. Drawing on the concept of embodied spectatorship (Rachel Fensham, 2009), it investigates how theatrical watching—though non-interactive—can activate affective, cognitive, and social engagement in the audience.

Building on Augusto Boal’s redefinition of the spectator as spect-actor within the Theatre of the Oppressed, the study acknowledges the importance of collapsing the binary between performer and audience. However, it also moves beyond interactive forms to explore how non-participatory spectatorship can itself constitute a political act.

Through the lens of Judith Butler’s concept of the Right to Appear (“Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly”, 2015), this paper argues that theatre enables the public emergence of bodies that are often rendered invisible or unrecognisable in political discourse. The stage becomes a site of appearance, a space where marginalised identities can claim presence. As Butler notes, «One way to understand the politics of the body is to consider it as a site of appearance, one whose political value is linked with its capacity to be perceptible, recognizable, and present.» In this sense, theatre redistributes not only affect and experience, but also agency and recognisability, staging possible future beings and expanding the spectrum of what can be socially imagined.

This theoretical trajectory culminates in the figure of the witness, as conceptualised by Jerzy Grotowski. Even without physical intervention, witnesses are drawn into a transformative experience, in which they absorb, elaborate, and potentially translate the theatrical event into broader political or social awareness. In other words, witnessing embodies the right to appear by recognising and sustaining what is made visible on stage. In theatre, spectating is a generative act of presence, where the one who watches becomes the site through which the possible body—plural, marginal, future—enters the domain of the real.

Biography

Lisa Celsi is a second-year PhD candidate (XXXIX cycle) in the History of Ideas program at Vita-Salute San Raffaele University in Milan, enrolled in a joint PhD program with Avignon Université (France), where she is affiliated with the Department of Études Théâtrales. Her research focuses on the relationship between theatre and philosophy, with particular attention to the development of the idea of the spectator in contemporary theatre. Supervised by Andrea Tagliapietra, Paola Ranzini, and Caterina Piccione, her work moves across the history of ideas, theatre theory and practice, and performance studies in an interdisciplinary framework. Alongside her academic research, she is also a trained actress and co-founder of an independent theatre company based in Milan.

Ljubi Matic

Taking in a Gift-Back Performance

In 2011, the Belgian theatre company Ontroerend Goed caused outrage by conceiving of their piece *Audience* as a thoroughly uncomfortable sequence of outrageous bullying of spectators. What started with the camera panning the attendants – so that every blemish on their faces was projected via a live feed to a big on-stage screen – escalated into an hour of blunt mediatized humiliation dividing audience members into those verbally prodded to enact behavior improper to theatre and others called to either intervene against or be complicit in such instigations. In *Thanks for Being Here* (2024) the company revisits their stratagem of subjecting spectators to live video's blandishments. This time, though, no confrontational tone is evoked: the spectators are asked to do nothing but sit back and watch each others' close-ups, as if the evidence – indisputable since transmitted live – of their corruptibility in the theatre apparatus were no longer at stake. Any escape from the camera's slow scanning, row by row, past every single face present, still seems impossible. However, as a compensation of sorts for their unwished-for visibility, in this admittedly audience-friendly sequel attendants are offered to have their wishes (regarding the components of the show) fulfilled. Therefore, the performance emerges as a sweet gift for an audience's mere existence, a token of gratitude tailor-made for it each night. While the open-end structure of the show lulls attendants into believing the promise of its decentring and customizability, the idea that theatregoers decide what the production will consist of is, needless to say, a joke – the ingenious mix of live and pre-recorded audio and video of all of the attendants is tightly scripted. Director Alexander Devriendt has a firm grip on the reins. Spectators are not told whether it is the theatremakers themselves or some kind of a predictive algorithm who decides which particular viewer's wish is going to be granted in the next performance, but they are persuaded they are offered exactly what they want. And this persuasion makes one think of the distinctly economic neoliberal interest with the customers being given exactly what it is that they think they want. It goes without saying, endorsing what spectators think they'd like included in the shows they see kills, within them, a slightest possibility of changing existing aesthetic preferences or, for that matter, political perspectives – altogether. Examined in the context of today's surveillance economy, the dynamics between these two theatrical mind game productions demonstrates that ironic interpellation of the spectator has extended beyond verbal 'hailing' and can be effected through the purportedly democratised exchange of recordings as digital objects, i.e., forms of digital capital.

Biography

Ljubi Matic is an Assistant Professor at University Union – Nikola Tesla in Belgrade, Serbia. After earning an MFA degree in Theatre Directing from University of Arts in Belgrade and a PhD degree in Theatre and Performance Studies from Stanford University, he taught theatre courses at University of North Dakota and University of Maine.

Luca Domenico Artuso

Haunting the Patriarchal Order:

Aoki Ryōko's Artistic Practice and the Politics of Tradition in Japanese Nō Theatre

In the landscape of contemporary Japanese theatre, classical art forms like Nō and Kabuki hold a hegemonic cultural position as UNESCO-designated Intangible Cultural Heritage. This privileged status stems from their hereditary structures of artistic transmission, rooted in the premodern 'family-head system' (iemoto-seido; see Rath 2016). Within this patriarchal structure, practitioners and performers are organized into a fictive hierarchical kinship network (Shimazaki & Shimazaki 2004), which has, on the one hand, preserved performance styles along with costumes, masks, and props unique to these arts. On the other hand, it has reinforced broader societal gender inequalities, institutionalizing the exclusion of women from the art form (Geilhorn 2011), and restricted cross-theatrical exchanges (Aoki 2014, Watanabe 2002), framing Nō as an insular, monolithic tradition resistant to external influences.

This paper examines the artistic practice of Aoki Ryōko, a female singer and performer trained in Nō but operating outside its hereditary framework. By recontextualizing Nō chant (*utai*) within contemporary classical music, Aoki strategically disrupts long-standing institutional constraints. Collaborating with composers such as Peter Eötvös, Toshio Hosokawa, and Stefano Gervasoni, her new works challenge Nō's patriarchal authority while expanding its aesthetic vocabulary. Her repertoire—over 60 commissioned works—both engages with and unsettles Nō's gendered hierarchies and performative boundaries.

Situating Aoki's work within broader strategies of decentring and democratizing classical Japanese performance, this study explores how her integration of 'utai' into contemporary opera and avant-garde compositions—such as Hosokawa's 'Futari Shizuka: The Maiden of the Sea' (2017)—reconfigures Nō's aesthetics. Through qualitative interviews and phenomenological analysis, it interrogates how these cross-genre interactions reshape the perception and function of Nō in new artistic contexts. In doing so, this paper contributes to discussions on gendered performance traditions, cross-genre experimentation, and the evolving fluidity of cultural heritage in contemporary theatre and music.

Biography

Luca Domenico Artuso (he/him) is a PhD researcher in Theatre and Intermediality at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. He holds an MA in Japanese Studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice. His doctoral project, 'More-than-Human Japanese Dramaturgies and Their Performative Ends', adopts gender studies and a feminist approach to examining Nō theatre and contemporary Japanese performance. He has been training in Nō since 2017 whenever he has the opportunity to return to Japan.

Madli Pesti

Political Theatre – between manifestation of identity and entertainment

My paper discusses matters of identity and the role of theatre in social, cultural and political transaction together with questions of entertainment. I will discuss a new type of political theatre born in Estonia – political performance as a liturgical Mass! The production “In Safe Hands. The Reform Party Mass” (2024) celebrates the 30th anniversary of the founding of Estonia’s most important party in power. The Reform Party has won the last five parliamentary elections. The Prime Minister of Estonia has been from the Reform Party for over 15 years. They have been in government for 22 of the last 30 years. They have shaped what and how we – Estonians – think. The Von Krahle Theatre’s production combines ecclesiastical Mass, documentary theatre, object theatre, choral singing and satire. The production interweaves Christian symbolism with political rhetoric. It is an affective production that looks back on the decades in which one political party and their (liberal) worldview have shaped the Estonian society. “In Safe Hands” is a production impossible to ignore, it brought up heated debates. In my presentation, I will analyse the affective impact of the production, what does it have to say on manifestation of identity and what does the entertainment quality of the performance do with such kind of a political topic.

Biography

Madli Pesti has a PhD in theatre research at Tartu University, Estonia (dissertation “Political Theatre and its Strategies in the Estonian and Western Cultures”, 2016). She has studied at the University of Aarhus, at the Humboldt University and Free University Berlin. Pesti is working as a senior researcher in the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and runs the practice as research PhD programme. Her research areas are performance analysis and theory, political and applied theatre. In 2018 she published “100 Years of Estonian Theatre”, an overview of Estonian theatre in the past and today. She has also been writing theatre reviews since 2002, winning the award as the best theatre critic at the Estonian Annual Theatre Awards in 2019.

Mahsa Sheydani

Hamlet the Spectator: How a Canonical Text’ vision Multiplies Through Dissolution

Hamlet has been excessively appropriated, fragmented, and stretched across different performance traditions, political contexts, and digital platforms to the point of dissolution. This research examines the process, through which Hamlet, as a canonical text, loses its singular, authoritative textuality and transforms into a liminal, decentralized space, in which counter-hegemonic interference, opposition, and democratized performative acts can take shape. Following Diana Taylor’s *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), in which she believes that the repertoire works as a mode of transmitting knowledge beyond [official] archives, and Marvin Carlson’s concept of the theatrical *déjà vu* and the historical performance memory in *The Haunted Stage* (2003), I explore Hamlet as a fractured text and a malfunctioning singular-textual entity, transformed into a field of networked participation, reconfiguration, and disruption. Through Erika Fischer-Lichte’s concept of ‘autopoietic feedback loops’ (2008), I argue how Hamlet, its performers, its audience, and the text itself all become spectators, observing each other in a decentralized performance ethic. I will examine my argument through *Grand Theft Hamlet* (2024) as a case study, which was created entirely as a performance/documentary within the open-world video game *Grand Theft Auto Online* during the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea of performing Hamlet in GTA provides a site of radical accessibility, where anyone – regardless of background, gender, or intention – could intervene, disrupt, or even kill the actors/users within the digital *Elsinore/GTA/performance* space. In this context, the textual authority of Hamlet as a canonical text is eaten away by massive reproduction and reinterpretations, reframing it as a decentralized, networked phenomenon. Within this argument, Hamlet the text is re-situated as an active spectator, observing its own dissolved canonicity within collective networks of re-interpretations and ongoing transformation.

Biography

Mahsa Sheydani is a doctoral researcher in Creative Arts at Loughborough University, UK. With a background in Theatre, Dramatic Literature, and Media Arts, her research explores the intersections of performance, memory, and resistance, contributing to a broader understanding of cultural preservation and reinterpretation.

Her current research investigates how performance can become a site of cultural memory and political resonance. She engages with documentary theatre, counter-archives, and the poetics of absence to explore this dynamic.

Maíra Santos

Scores in Flight: Democratizing Performance
Creation in the Peripheries of Lisbon and São Paulo

This study investigates how choreographic and theatrical scores — formal structures often tied to Euro-American metropolitan contexts — can be decentralized, redistributed, and reimagined within marginalized urban spaces marked by colonial legacies, racial discrimination, and social precarity. Through case studies in Quinta da Princesa (Lisbon) and Pimentas District (São Paulo), we explore how adapting scores for community performances fosters democratized artistic practices, challenging extractivist epistemologies.

Using performative ethnography, we analyze the transposition of Anna Halprin's *The Earth Run* — a score created in response to violence against women in California — to the post-colonial periphery of Lisbon, where it sparked ethical debates about exposing trauma in a space already shaped by structural violence. Later, in São Paulo, the same score evolved into a samba circle, engaging 60 children and women from a migrant community in collaboration with a University and a Theatre. These processes decentralized authorship, privileging the improvisational knowledge of peripheral bodies — conceptualized through Mbembe's "border-body" and DeFrantz's "Black performatives" — as sites of resistance and creativity.

By articulating post-colonial theories (Mbembe, Spillers) and decolonial approaches (such as DeFrantz's Black performatives) with community art practices, we argue that such interventions reconfigure cultural agency through three modes: geographic decentralization (shifting scores from Euro-American contexts to diasporic margins), collective reimagining (transforming rigid structures into fluid rituals, like samba), and institutional reconfiguration (building partnerships between universities and peripheries). These practices not only democratize access to artistic creation but also redefine value regimes in performance, prioritizing *communitas* over individual virtuosity. Amid pandemic exhaustion and necropolitical governance, they disrupt colonial hierarchies by repositioning the epistemologies of Black, migrant, and peripheral communities.

Finally, this study positions score-based art as a tool of embodied solidarity — one that traverses the body and senses beyond abstract discourse — where formal experimentation and social justice converge to imagine decolonial futures.

Biography

Maíra Santos (São Paulo), based in Lisbon, is a dancer-scholar, choreographer, and anthropologist reconfiguring boundaries between embodied practice and academic inquiry. She holds a BA (University of São Paulo), MA (State University of Campinas), and PhD (University of Lisbon) in Social Sciences, Social Anthropology, and Dance Studies. As a research fellow at the University of Lisbon's Center for Theater Studies, she focuses on Discursive Practices in Performing Arts. Since 2021, she has led interdisciplinary art-anthropology projects, analyzing walking as artistic praxis in Afro-diasporic peripheries of Brazil and Portugal. She is also the coordinator of the research group EHPALA (UNIFESP-Brazil).

Małgorzata Budzowska

Performing art as a counter-hegemonic practise.
Institute of Performing Law by Michał Zadara

From 2021 there has been a humanitarian crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, which is also the external border of the EU. The Belarusian dictator is waging a hybrid war against the EU, using desperate refugees from the Middle East and Africa, who are brought to Belarus and then to the Polish border and forced to cross it illegally. According to the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the actions of the Belarusian services on the border with Poland constitute a crime against humanity. On the other hand, the Polish government, with the permission of the EU and with the support of Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency), is committing illegal push-backs and treating asylum seekers in an inhumane way.

In the face of this crisis, Polish theatre director, Michał Zadara, together with a group of lawyers, established the Institute of Performing Law and they created two performances in the convention of investigative theatre: *Responsibility* (2022) and *Borderline Situation* (2024) that aim to identify those responsible for the humanitarian crisis on the border among representatives of the Polish government and to prepare and possibly file lawsuits in court.

The paper will focus on the two aforementioned performances in order to analyse them as counter-hegemonic artistic practices that decentre the hegemonic narratives of power in accordance with Chantal Mouffe's idea of critical art. The counter-hegemonic value of Zadara's performances is also revealed in the counter-convention of post-theatre: the specific reception of the idea of poor theatre, which subjects its own medium to constant self-reflection. The aim of this paper is to trace these two, content- and form-wise, counter-hegemonic paths of Zadara's performances as they are impulse to decentre hegemonic narratives about refugee crises and to subject the medium of theatre itself to disillusion.

Biography

Małgorzata Budzowska is Associate Professor in the Department of Drama and Theatre, University of Lodz in Poland, and Research Associate in the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama at University of Oxford. She publishes academic books and articles regarding classical reception in contemporary theatre and the political of theatre. Currently she is involved in the research project funded by the National Science Centre in Poland: *Critical Disillusions. Refiguring the Tragic in Polish Postdramatic Theatre*, that investigates dramaturgical and directing strategies to express environmental, migration, and emancipation (women, LGBTQ community) crises from the perspective of ecosophy and critical posthumanism.

Marcela Moura

Recycling as a process of decentralisation, distribution and democratisation

This paper takes a systemic approach to analysing how recycling can help to decentralise and promote a distribution of means of production that promotes access to creation. According to the systemic approach, a system comprises flows of various kinds – circulating in its different networks and reservoirs – and also feedback loops, which are actions in return for effects on their own causes. The notion of recycling is at the heart of thinking linked to complex living systems. The flows of ecosystems are continuous and are renewed, transformed, appropriated and recycled. In the theatrical ecosystem, there are various collectives in France that recycle set materials, such as ArtStock – a cultural recycling centre that collects materials and sets, Récupscène – a platform that puts people who want to dispose of sets in touch with one another, and the 17h25 collective, which brings together cultural organisations committed to an ecological and societal transition, such as the Théâtre du Châtelet, the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, the Opéra de Paris, the Opéra de Lyon and the Théâtre de la Monnaie.

To what extent can recycling of materials give rise to new artistic forms? Is it a factor in the aesthetic impoverishment of sets, or a challenge to creativity? Would the tinker artist be one who creates from the arrangement of heterogeneous materials, from tinkering with bits and pieces? In this case, could recycling contribute to enhancing the value of more modest works, rejected from the circuit of recognised works? We ask how the process of recycling materials can generate a more ecological dynamic, an aesthetic renewal and a civic engagement.

Biography

Marcela Moura (Marcilene De Moura), artist, researcher. Doctorate in theatre (Co-tutelle between Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 and Unirio) with thesis: “The Creation Process of Enrique Diaz or the Construction of Fuzzy Systems” – Proposing a systemic vision for theatre. Practical experience in Brazil as a director, actor and educator. She currently teaches remotely at the Cesgranrio University. She carries out research on theatre and ecosystems within the Post-Graduation Program in Performing Arts at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), as part of a post-doctorate supported by FAPERJ – Fundação Carlos Chagas Filho de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.

Margherita Laera

Decentring the Primacy of English: Theatre (in) Translation and its Barriers

In the UK theatre system, the translation and staging of plays originally written in languages other than English is a marginalised practice that produces an average of under 4% of the total annual production output in England and Wales (British Theatre Repertoire 2013). By contrast, in countries such as Romania, plays in translation are highly sought after and form more than half of the annual output. How are such disparities possible, and what discourses and ecologies sustain such marginalisation in the UK?

Professional theatre systems in different national contexts can vary greatly in their approach to, and attitude towards, plays written in languages other than the local one(s) and representing ‘other’ cultures. A combination of socio-historical factors – such as the geopolitical positionality of both the receiving and originating contexts, the ideologies embedded in education curricula, and artistic traditions – can produce ecosystems where international plays, translated and performed in local languages, are highly valued cultural imports, or entirely neglected, or somewhere in between.

In this paper, I offer my analysis of the current monolingual worldview underpinning the British theatre system, and how this interacts with, and is supported by, similar attitudes in the fields of education, publishing and performing arts training. This research will shed light on the extent of the barriers facing international plays on British stages, and on the remarkable work it would take to decentre the primacy of English within British society. This research acts as contextualisation for an educational intervention that I designed challenge and complicate monolingual attitudes and foster multilingual dialogue in England, starting from secondary schools.

Biography

Margherita Laera is a Senior Lecturer in Drama and Theatre at the University of Kent, where she is Director of Research and Innovation for the School of Arts and Architecture. She is the author of *Playwriting in Europe: Mapping Ecosystems and Practices with Fabulamundi* (Routledge, 2022); *Theatre & Translation* (Red Globe Press, 2019) and *Reaching Athens: Community, Democracy and Other Mythologies in Adaptations of Greek Tragedy* (Peter Lang, 2013), and editor of *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat* (Bloomsbury, 2014) and *The Methuen Drama Anthology of Contemporary Italian Plays* (Bloomsbury, 2025). Margherita is co-editor of the *Theatre & book series* (Bloomsbury) and also works as a theatre translator from and into Italian and English. She has translated works by Shakespeare, Stefano Massini, Davide Carnevali, Valentina Diana and Nalini Vidoolah Mootoosamy. Margherita is a Trustee of Actors Touring Company.

Maria Konomi

"I have no oxygen": Visual and Performative Elements in Anti Corruption Demonstrations for Justice for Tempi Victims in Greece"

The right to socio-political protest in public space is a fundamental democratic citizen right. Expanded visual, performative and costuming practices have always been present as forms of political practice but have proliferated in the last decade as protest mobilizations have increasingly adopted these tactics to express embodied dissent creating a rich reservoir of diverse forms, meanings and experiences of performativity. The political effect of visual and performative elements in protests highlights the essential interconnections of creative performative approaches with complex real-life conditions and socio-political contexts. Regarding this, we will investigate and discuss the visual and performative dimension of the anti-corruption demonstrations for justice for Tempi victims across Greece and in cities worldwide. Many thousands of people have been rallying after the 2023 Tempi train crash, which killed 57 people, many of them young students, in a wave of protests demanding justice and accountability for one of the country's worst railway disasters related also to governmental corruption and cover up. The demonstrations have been ongoing and peaked on 28th February 2025, at the two year memorial of the tragic incident, with an estimated 1,000,000 people participating in the Athens rally alone. Major gatherings happened in Athens (Syntagma Square) and Thessaloniki (Venizelos Statue), with additional protests in more than 380 locations globally, including 262 cities in Greece and 120 abroad. The protests have been driven by ongoing public frustration over the lack of accountability for the disaster, with the phrase "I can't breathe" becoming a rallying cry symbolizing the victims and their families' fight for justice. In the above context we will draw attention to the efficacy of performing protest with regard to social and political change and the crucial contribution of the visual and performative elements in these protests.

Biography

Assistant Professor at the Department of Theatre Studies, University of Athens (NKUA) and a scenographer and visual artist/curator. Maria has over ninety credits in visual and performing arts and film presenting her work internationally including the UK, Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada, Cyprus and Czech Republic. She was part of the curatorial team for the Greek professional participation at the Prague Quadrennial PQ23 exhibition, co-editor of the catalogue *A Rare Gathering* (2023) and co-curator of the PQGreek student exhibition. She is the author of *Modern and Contemporary Scenography. Milestones and Developments* (2021) and many chapters and journal papers. She has organized the international conference 'Expanded Scenography, Performance and Public Space' (Athens, 2024).

Marianna Lucarini

Who Distributes What, and for Whom? The Paradox of Cultural Democratization in Occupied Spaces

Occupied cultural spaces are often regarded as examples of decentralization and democratization in artistic production, challenging institutional hierarchies (Bishop, 2012; Rancière, 2009). However, these spaces raise complex questions: Who truly makes decisions? What organizational models emerge? Does artistic production become more accessible, or do new forms of exclusion arise?

This presentation examines these issues through four case studies: Teatro Valle Occupato (Rome), 6B (Paris), Kunsthau Tacheles (Berlin), and Tabacalera (Madrid). It explores the dynamics of autonomy, institutionalization, and power distribution in self-managed cultural spaces.

First, the paradox of cultural democratization is analyzed. As Bourdieu argues, "no cultural field is ever truly horizontal: even in the most democratic structures, mechanisms of distinction and exclusion emerge" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42). In these spaces, cultural and subcultural capital can create new forms of legitimacy, shaping access to decision-making.

Second, the tension between horizontality and informal leadership is considered. Freeman's *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* highlights that "any collective without explicit structures tends to develop informal elites, which are difficult to identify and challenge" (Freeman, 1972, p. 5). In Teatro Valle and Tabacalera, governance assemblies often saw certain figures accumulating influence.

Finally, the transition from decentralization to re-centralization is explored. Tacheles was absorbed into Berlin's gentrification process, shifting from a resistance space to a cultural brand (Holert, 2013). Similarly, Tabacalera transitioned from self-management to state concession, altering its power dynamics.

This presentation will spark discussion on the contradictions within cultural decentralization and explore whether self-managed spaces can sustain their autonomy or inevitably reproduce new centers of power.

Biography

Marianna Lucarini is a PhD candidate in a joint doctoral program between Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 and Università degli Studi Roma Tre. Her dissertation project, titled "Rapports de force", explores theatre production in squatted spaces across Europe from the 1970s to the early 2000s, with a particular focus on urban transformation and the effects of gentrification. Her case studies include Teatro Valle Occupato (Rome), Kunsthau Tacheles (Berlin), La Tabacalera (Madrid), and Le 6b (Saint-Denis). She has worked in artistic direction, production, and communication for several theatre institutions, including Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Emilia Romagna Teatro, and Fondazione Teatro di Roma.

Mark Love-Smith

Radical openness in large-scale community theatre-making

Large-scale community theatre productions in the UK offer both potential for and challenges to models of theatre-making which aim to decentre, distribute and democratise access to creative processes.

Large non-professional (unpaid) casts and back-stage crews work alongside professional directors, designers and actors to realise often spectacular productions with hundreds or even thousands of contributors. Many of these take place away from traditional theatre buildings, taking performance work out into the communities from which they spring.

The professional structures behind the projects can be some of the most distributed among UK theatre practices, with teams of associate or assistant directors taking responsibility for certain aspects of or sequences in the performance, away from the guiding hand of the overall project leader.

This paper explores ways in which large-scale community theatre has been and could be decentred, distributed and democratised, in moving towards what I term ‘radically open’ community practice. It also problematises this notion by identifying the tensions at play.

It draws in particular on examples from the recent history of large-scale community work in York over the past fifteen years. Interview material with some key players, including Slung Low’s Alan Lane, points to the tension between a desire for radical openness and a need for a ‘centre’, in the shape of charismatic leadership and clear objectives. In what ways does (or can) strong leadership foster democratic participation in or around these production processes? How far can leadership or authorship be distributed when working at such scale? Could a creative process emerge which wrote the ‘professionals’ out and became ‘radically open’? And is this what participants really want?

Biography

Mark Love-Smith is a Senior Lecturer in Theatre at the University of York. He has research interests in devised and physical theatre, community theatre, and the interplay of writing, directing and devising. His co-authored the Routledge Performance Practitioners book on Frantic Assembly with Professor Mark Evans, and his jointly edited collection, *Research and Development in British Theatre*, will be published by Methuen in June 2025.

Marlene Behrmann

Interdisciplinary cross-cultural tandem match making in performing arts as an act of decentralizing

In 2024, the Sustainable Theater Lab at the ligeti zentrum (Hamburg) launched an experimental residency format: four international tandems, each pairing a student from the MA program HIMT – Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg with an artist from another region of the world. The project aimed to enable collaborative artistic inquiry into climate-related urgencies—such as biodiversity loss, environmental justice, and food security—across cultural and structural difference. This paper reflects on early learnings and emerging questions from the residency process. Initially framed by a broader research interest in the societal impact of the performing arts, this iteration shifts the focus: rather than studying effects on audiences or publics, it explores the impact on the artists themselves. How are they affected—emotionally, ethically, and in terms of their creative practice—when engaging with ecological themes in collaboration with a partner from a different socio-cultural and artistic background?

The format itself—hybrid, time-limited, and based on unfamiliar partnerships—produced unique dynamics of proximity and distance, trust and friction. Asymmetries in institutional affiliation, access, and aesthetic codes further shaped the collaborative process. Several participants described shifts in their artistic vocabulary, their sense of responsibility, or their orientation toward broader societal questions. While the qualitative evaluation of artist interviews is still ongoing, initial insights suggest that dealing with climate-related topics in a translocal and intercultural setting can lead to significant transformations in artistic self-conception. At the same time, the reflection raises questions about the extent to which artists—working at the intersection of ecology and cross-cultural collaboration—are perceived or framed as agents of change, even when they do not explicitly claim this position.

Rather than presenting conclusive findings, this contribution offers conceptual anchors and observed tensions to invite discussion. It connects these reflections to ongoing discourses on ecological aesthetics, collaborative authorship, and the ethics of international artistic cooperation.

Biography

Marlene Behrmann is a singer, performer, researcher, lecturer and cultural manager. She works in the Sustainable Theater Lab at the ligeti center in Hamburg. In her approach of the “Sustainable Theater Real Lab”, she aims to carry out interventions in the sense of real-life experiments in a theatrical context in order to examine social dynamics and processes both artistically and scientifically. The role of culture and aesthetics in the Great Transformation towards sustainable societies is the focus of her work, which she also addresses in her doctoral project at the University of Music Weimar. Her current focus is on the societal impact of the performing arts. She has experience in qualitative research, having been responsible for conducting and analyzing qualitative interviews as part of the “Experimental Concert Research” project (Zeppelin Universität (Friedrichshafen) am WÜRTH Chair of Cultural Production). At the Hamburg University of Music and Theater, she worked as a lecturer in musicology in a special program for international students, which brought together two of her other areas of interest: music and language.

Marta Ribeiro

Female Voices, Censored Stages:
Resilience and Cultural Resistance in
Portugal during the Marcelist Spring

This research explores the fundamental role of women in Portuguese theatre during the last years of the Estado Novo, a period marked by repression and censorship, especially during the so-called 'Marcelist Spring'. Through an analysis of censorship reports from 1973 and 1974, this study examines how women theatre leaders and entrepreneurs—directors, playwrights and actresses—not only resisted the restrictions imposed by the regime but also developed creative strategies of survival and adaptation to keep the performing arts alive.

Using a quantitative methodology based on unpublished documents and a qualitative approach focusing on female figures, this research highlights how these women built spaces of resilience, defying oppression and pushing the boundaries of theatrical expression. It also analyses the impact of censorship on their works and on the theatrical culture of the time, revealing the transformative role these women played in defending democratic values and preserving a resilient cultural identity.

This work contributes to a new understanding of Portuguese theatre during the period by mapping cultural resistance and women's leadership in an adverse context, and by vindicating the contributions of women to the history of theatre and democracy in Portugal.

Biography

Artist and researcher with degrees in Theatre from ESAD. CR (Portugal) and RESAD Madrid. Holds master's degrees in Theatre and Performing Arts (with distinction, Complutense University of Madrid) and Artistic Mediation (Faculty of Fine Arts, UCM). Performed as an actress in Portugal, Spain, Germany, and Lithuania, notably as the first Portuguese actress in a Netflix film (*Elisa y Marcela*, Isabel Coixet, Berlinale 2019). Taught Portuguese as a Foreign Language at UCM and Babeş-Bolyai University (Romania). Founder of KAMM Artistic Europe, an NGO supporting migration projects and LGBTQI+ rights. Currently Visiting Scholar at Harvard University and PhD candidate at UCM and Temple University.

Martin Bernátek

Radicalizing Culture: Avant-Garde Theatre's
Engagement with the Working Class

The interwar avant-garde performance is a central point of reference not only for its experimental aesthetics, but also for its political and socio-transformative functions of theatre. This paper examines the relationship between the theatrical avant-garde and the labour movement, focusing on regions beyond the major centres and outside the Western art canon, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. Avant-garde creators, often inspired by left-wing politics, sought to shape new audiences through radical stage forms, innovative architectural solutions and specific pedagogical strategies.

Notable examples include Erwin Piscator and Gropius's Total Theatre, Szymon Syrkus and Andrzej Pronaszko's Teatr Simultaniczny, and the works of Asja Lācis, Antonina Sokolicz and Witold Wandurski, whose engagement with working class audiences included educational and ideological dimensions. Special attention is given to the audience development strategies employed by avant-garde theatres – from collecting audience feedback to establishing 'friends' clubs' to disseminate avant-garde ideas and support regional theatre networks. The practice of Emil František Burian in interwar Czechoslovakia is used as an illustrative example.

Methodologically, the paper draws on Jill Dolan's concept of 'utopian performatives' and analyses avant-garde writings on spectatorship. It examines how the notion of a "new audience" articulated transformative performative power of theatre, but also class antagonisms, binary oppositions between old and new, individual and collective, and how these narratives critically addressed the topology of cultural production and distribution.

The first part outlines the general tendencies of theatrical avant-gardes in the newly established states after the First World War and their relationship to the working class. The second part analyses the specific case of Divadlo D in Prague in the late 1930s, observing how anti-fascist and anti-authoritarian tendencies were reflected in contemporary audience communication. This study provides a historical analysis of avant-garde strategies of audience engagement also to offer insights into contemporary anti-authoritarian theatrical practices.

Biography

Mgr. Martin Bernátek, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Palacký University Olomouc. In his research he focuses on theatre spaces of interwar avant-garde theatre in Central Europe and relations between theatre and audiovisual forms in the early 20th century. He is a member of IFTR, EASTAP and European network for Avant-garde and Modernism Studies.

Martina Groß

Decentring theatre and performance history – Reflections on historiography and/as aesthetic practice

Recent debates on the democratisation and decolonisation of theatre and performance studies have shown that such efforts must begin with a fundamental revision of historiography, particularly its material foundations (cf. Nikita Dhawan, Lisa Skwirblies/Azadeh Sharifi). This includes rethinking what constitutes the material of historiography and what is considered ‘worthy of remembrance’. The approach and subject matter of ‘decentring historiography’ (Natalie Zemon Davies), which views history not only from the perspective of a world region or power elites but broadens the social and geographical view to make a multitude of voices heard, will provide a theoretical framework here. In this endeavour, I would like to consider historiography as an aesthetic practice, which on the one hand enables us to understand the writing of history in its constitution between creation and construction, and on the other hand to include artistic positions in historiography. Accordingly, the key questions are: How can theatre and performance historiography be decentralised? What strategies and methods are necessary to achieve this?

Methods such as critical fabulation (Saidiya Hartman) seem particularly promising from an artistic perspective, as demonstrated in recent productions by Dorothee Munyaneza (Toi, moi Tituba...), Amanda Piña (EXOTICA – On the brown history of European dance) and Jaha Koo (The History of Korean Western Theatre). Using these examples, I will explore what it means to decentre theatre and performance history and how an understanding of historiography as a (critical) aesthetic practice can contribute to this.

Biography

Martina Groß is a professor at the Institute of Media, Theatre and Popular Culture at the University of Hildesheim. Prior to that, she worked as a research assistant at the Institutes of Theatre, Film and Media Studies and Romance Literatures at Goethe University Frankfurt, where she co-directed the MA programmes in dramaturgy and Erasmus Mundus in Performing Arts Studies. She was an interim professor of theatre studies at the LMU Munich and a fellow at the German Historical Institute in Paris. She is an associate member of the DFG Research Training Group 2477 ‘Aesthetic Practice’ and co-convenor of the working group ‘Theory and Practice’ of the German Society for Theatre Studies (GTW). Her research focuses on theatre historiography and travel literature, comic and popular theatre forms from the early modern period to the present, transnational theatre and transcultural knowledge transfer, translation in the context of philosophy, multilingualism and the politics of representation. Publications include *Querelle, Begräbnis, Wiederkehr*. Alain-René Lesage, *der Markt und das Theater* (2016); ‘Itinérances allemandes de Molière: l'exemple de la Berühmte Bande des Velten’ (*Littératures classiques*, Nr. 106, 3/2021) and ‘A French Hotel in Lima, Russia in Paris, and Theatre Laws in Transylvania: On Migration, Travel, and Transnational Female Theatre Historiography.’ (*European Theatre Migrants in the Age of Empire*. eds. Berenika Szymanski-Düll and Lisa Skwirblies 2024).

Mary Mazzilli

Decentring and decolonising theatre in post-Brexit neo-nationalist Britain

As a first-generation migrant scholar and theatre-maker, I welcomed the physical multicultural theatre company, Gecko's commission to produce a show, *Kin* about migration and displacement, which was staged in Spring 2024 at National Theatre in London. This has been soon followed by the tour of performance in public spaces in the UK and Europe of *From Here On*, about children's right to safety, marking the 85th anniversary of the Kindertransport with over 200 young people.

The two productions by an established international company notwithstanding, the migration experience, even in a multicultural melt pot like London, has remained and partially still remains a marginalised topic and so is the work of many migrant theatre-makers. This is despite the fact that in post-Brexit Britain the debate around migration has been extensively covered by media outlets, in particular in light of the recent antiimmigration riots (August 2024) and the rise of the far-right parties in the rest of Europe.

What do the representation of migration in British theatre and the participation of first-generation migrant theatre-makers tell us about the need to decentre and decolonise the London stage and British theatre more widely? In post-colonial, post-Brexit Britain should the theatre taking response-ability to decentre and de-hierarchise theatrical practices by addressing the rising popular xenophobia and anti-migration sentiment?

This paper will answer the above questions by assessing the impact of migrant stories and the work of migrant theatre-makers as part of grassroot companies and festivals through qualitative data from interviews with theatre-makers, producers and venues managers, gathered during my own ESRC-funded project *First generation migrants as freelance creative workers* (2021). Through the lens of auto-ethnography, I will also consider my own theatre-making, my recent attempts to produce text-based plays (*Priority Seating*, 2017 and *Lightstreams*, 2022–23) about migrant and for migrant theatre-makers.

Biography

Dr Mary Mazzilli is a Senior Lecturer in Drama and Literature at University of Essex, and co-director of the Centre For Theatre Research. She has an expertise in both Chinese and British drama and theatre. Before joining Essex in 2016, Mary worked at Goldsmiths College in the Theatre and Performance Department (2015–2016) and at Nanyang Technological University – Singapore (2012–2014). She is also a playwright; her plays have been staged in UK and China and have been awarded Arts Council England funding. In recent practice-based projects. Mary has focused on issues of migration and the effect of Brexit on migrant community through theatre.

Matteo Tamborrino, Giuliana Pititu

Decentring and Distributing in Piedmont Region: a Shift in Patterns

This paper begins by examining the now-historicized concept of “decentring”, understood here as a particular practice of performing arts distribution and organization, characteristic of the Italian theatre system in the late 20th century. Building on this preliminary framework, the discussion then turns to the more recent idea of “territorial rebalancing”, a revised formulation of decentring. This concept is proposed as a democratic model for rethinking relationships between centers and peripheries (whether geographical or social), with the goal of mitigating longstanding conflicts and inequalities in economic or cultural opportunities.

To illustrate this shift, the paper presents two case studies from the Piedmont region. The first examines the pioneering work of Edoardo Fadini—critic and cultural organizer—in decentralizing theatre in the suburbs of Turin during the 1960s and 1970s. The second explores the distribution (or co-planning) activities carried out since 2003 by the Piedmont Theatre Circuit (now “Piemonte dal Vivo Foundation”), which have played a significant role in extending theatrical offerings throughout the region.

Biography

Giuliana Pititu is a PhD student in Humanities at the University of Turin, as well as the president of the Cultural Association “Pratici e Vaporosi”. Her research focuses on Italian avant-garde theatre during the second half of the 20th century, with a particular emphasis on the artistic career of Carla Tatò, which has resulted in the publication of the volume “Carla Tatò. Dell’attore, del corpo scenico, della parola e della voce” (Zona, 2016). She is currently collaborating with Franco Perrelli on the series “Archivi della Critica” for the publisher Cue Press, and she has also edited, with Armando Petrini, the collection of critical writings by Edoardo Fadini, “Scritti sul teatro. Interventi, recensioni, saggi” (Cue Press, 2023).

Matteo Tamborrino, PhD is a Research Fellow at the University of Turin. He also teaches “Regional Policies and Performing Arts Management” and “Theatre Anthropology”. His research methodology is primarily grounded in a philological and historical approach. His principal areas of interest include: Italian experimental theatre; the cultural exchange between Siense and Spanish theatre during the “Siglo de Oro”; the art of the Yiddish actor; the distributional dynamics of performing arts in the Piedmont region; and the study of trash culture. Outside of academia, he works as a freelance journalist and currently collaborates with the Press Office of the “Piemonte dal Vivo Foundation.”

Melanie Fieldseth

Gestures of Decentring at a National Dance Company

This paper uses the conference theme of decentring to investigate how a trio of choreographic works commissioned by Carte Blanche, the Norwegian National Company for Contemporary Dance, have queried the institutional framework that enabled their production. “Jerada” (2016) by choreographer Bouchra Ouizguen (Morocco), “Nororoca” (2020) by choreographer Lia Rodrigues (Brazil) and “BIRGET; Ways to deal, ways to heal” (2023) by choreographer Elle Sofe Sara and visual artist and architect Joar Nango (Sápmi/Norway) have in common that they have used corporeal encounters with place to navigate differences in situatedness. The question is whether these acts of choreographic probing instigate a transformation or reinforce existing power relations and their institutional structures.

As one of three institutions for dance and the only contemporary dance company to receive funding directly from the Ministry of Culture, Carte Blanche occupies a privileged position in the context of dance and choreography in Norway. It is not unusual for companies such as Carte Blanche to commission or re-stage works by choreographers from around the world that work within a European contemporary dance context. Indeed, Ouizguen, Rodrigues and Sara have their own companies and participate in the transnational circulation of artistic productions through touring circuits and networks. The paper will however argue that there is something more at stake in these three collaborations than creating works to enter Carte Blanche’s repertoire. The creation and performance of a dance production is a temporal event, but it is also a corporeal encounter between bodies and practices in the tangible world of social, political and cultural realities. These realities merged with artistic processes as the company travelled to Marrakesh, Rio de Janeiro and Guovdageaidnu/Kautokeino, respectively, to work with the choreographers. Do these encounters gesture towards decentring the institutionalized situation of the national dance company or do they rearticulate and reaffirm it?

Biography

Melanie Fieldseth is a PhD candidate at the University of Bergen in Norway. Her research focuses on how transnational and global encounters, influences and entanglements have impacted contemporary performing arts history in Norway, with an emphasis on choreography and dance. She has previously worked as an advisor and researcher at Arts and Culture Norway and is also a dramaturg, critic and writer.

Paula Magalhães

Staging the process of democratic transformation: the revue theatre

In Portugal, during the PREC – Processo Revolucionário em Curso [Ongoing Revolutionary Process], the period that followed the Carnation Revolution (1974/1975), theatre emerged as a form of expression closely linked to the ideals of decentralisation, distribution and democratisation. As part of the broader movement for social and political transformation, theatre became a tool for popular mobilisation and education, reflecting the democratic aspirations of the time. In the process of democratisation, theatre serves as a political and social awareness tool.

Revue theatre, one of the most popular forms of Portuguese theatre, experienced significant shifts in the post-revolutionary period. Deeply connected to everyday life, this comic, satirical and critical genre had, during the dictatorship, managed to foster a sense of complicity with audiences through its creative ways of criticizing the regime and circumventing censorship. With the end of the dictatorship, the revue faced new challenges, caught between its commercial appeal and the growing demand for a more politically engaged theatre. The genre trembles, but it doesn't collapse immediately (the decline would happen years later). Instead, it became a kind of barometer for the changes taking place. It served both as a vehicle for exalting revolutionary ideals and as a means of satirising the excesses and contradictions of the new regime. Its defining characteristics allowed it to respond quickly to political events, addressing issues such as party struggles, economic transformations, and debates on the limits of freedom of expression.

This paper aims to explore the importance of the revue theatre during the PREC. Maintaining its close relationship with everyday life, PREC revues closely followed the evolution of this complex and sometimes turbulent process of democratic transformation in Portuguese society.

Biography

Paula Gomes Magalhães is a researcher at the Centre for Theatre Studies of the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon, and a professor at the same University. She holds a PhD and a master's degree in Theatre Studies. Her research focuses mainly on popular theatre. She is a member of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committees for the Directorate-General for the Arts. She is also a member of the Editorial Board of *Sinais de Cena* journal. She has published several studies related to Lisbon and theatre practices.

Pieter Verstraete

Exiled Lives on the Stage: Analyzing Life Narratives to Improve Democracies and Institutions

Taking exilic lives of theatre artists that are newly arriving in Berlin as the core of its inquiry, this presentation brings together methodological considerations of a 'critical theory in practice' focusing on how to compare different groups of theatre artists who have experienced personal loss and tragedy due to political circumstance and displacement. I will explore the potential contribution of life narratives to democratization processes and public awareness around migrant positions in our Western European societies. One significant aspect I will be focusing on is the comparison of ethnographic statements of participants in the ExiLives project (<https://exiledlives.eu/>) with current policies within their own respective political contexts, particularly of the growing far Right in the Netherlands and Germany. It asks then the questions: despite silent processes of exile, such as from Turkey, Ukraine or Belarus still being in motion, what can we learn from the different institutional responses to the Turkish exiles in 2017 or the Ukrainian refugees in 2022 for the more recent arrivals? How can representations of exilic life be gauged as models for that reality which is "strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (Said 2000, 137)? And how can theatre play an active role in actively reshaping our views and norms around present day narratives and aesthetic representations of exile as transformative, as well as be a compass of our current democratic institutions and the political configuration we live by today?

Biography

Pieter Verstraete is a tenured Senior Lecturer in Arts, Culture and Media at the University of Groningen. In 2023, he finished a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellowship at the Theatre Studies Institute of the Free University of Berlin. He is Editor in Chief of the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance*, an active member of the Executive Committee of EASTAP, and Chair of the MCAA Benelux Chapter. He also works as a freelance theatre critic for *Theaterkrant.nl* and frequently advises Arts Councils in Netherlands and Flanders. His latest co-edited volume, *Theatre, Performance and Commemoration: Staging Crisis, Memory and Nationhood* was published in 2023 by Bloomsbury/Methuen Drama.

Raquel Madeira

Platformisation of dance stages or the mirror of human connections in the post-digital era: 'Solas'(2023) by Candela Capitân.

In today's hyper-mediated and polarised societies, the dizzying circulation of online contents and their impact, for example, on the construction and redefinition of social roles/referentials or the perpetuation of stereotypes, have given rise to controversial debates. In this massive 'digital panopticon' (Chul-Han, 2014) where people voluntarily expose themselves, digital universes are no longer understood as direct representation of the physical world, but instead as an agent that create affective worlds with their own power, that influence the way we move, relate, and interact – from intimate to public sphere.

This presentation starts from this assumption of hybridisation of physical and digital, as an intermedial and platformised (Dijck, 2018) generator of common realities and fictions, to discuss the subversive, discursive and also ambiguous potential of using digital platforms in performing arts. The aim is to examine their possible implications in aspects such as: interaction with the audience; hybridization of spectator-user; new models of dissemination, access and shared authorship.

In her recent performance, Solas (2023), Candela Capitân explore the exacerbated crossing of media and devices, the hyper-individualism and hyper-connectivity of social networks, to debate themes such as violence, sexuality, consumption, or the capitalisation of the woman's body in data market. In an almost atopic stage, five dancers with five laptops and several smartphones, perform and live stream through Chaturbate, a choreographed meta-portrait of the post-digital era.

Starting from the analysis of this performance, their inherent questions and interviews conducted as part of this research, we intend to contribute to the debate on questions such as: How can we understand the performing dance stage between the tensions of online and offline, and consider the notion dissemination in the light of these hybrid proposals/formats? Can the use of social media platforms, in the creative process or/and presentation, democratise performance or contribute to democratisation in/and through performance?

Biography

Raquel Rodrigues Madeira (Lisbon, 1984) is a dancer, and researcher in ICNOVA (Performance & Cognition RG and Scenic Experimentation Laboratory). PhD student in Communication Sciences (Communication and Arts) at NOVA|FCSH University of Lisbon. FCT scholarship holder with the project «From the Internet to Dance stages: participation, intermediality and new collaborations between the physical and the digital». Master in Scenic Arts by NOVA University of Lisbon and graduated in Dance by ESD|Higher School of Dance. Distinguished in 2022 with 'Estudar a Dança' Award, by DGPC through the National Theater and Dance Museum. Co-editor of CRATERA, the Performance & Cognition RG website.

Rebecca Infield

Decentring Censorship in Colonial French Algeria: Hocine Bouzaher's 'Des Voix dans la casbah' (1960)

This paper considers the collection of plays 'Des Voix dans la casbah' published in 1960 by the Algerian writer Hocine Bouzaher. Written in French and published by the French editor François Maspero, the collection was banned swiftly after going to press under censorship laws in place in France during the Algerian War of Independence (1954 -1962). The author's name was misspelt on the cover (perhaps intentionally) and the collection is prefaced by a mock interview with himself explaining his choice, amongst other things, to write in the language of the coloniser. Bouzaher intentionally plays with censorship and I argue that the choice to write this anti-colonial text in French illustrates how censorship can be used as a force for creation and resistance.

Bouzaher's work demonstrates a kind of bilateral censorship whereby the writer is not only outwardly censored by the authorities but also by himself in order to participate in a politically charged act. Bouzaher refers to the 'decision' to 'convert' the text into the language of the coloniser to denounce colonial violence not only in Algeria but also in the other regions undergoing decolonisation. The writer therefore decentres our understanding of censorship but also highlights how decolonisation was not only centred on one geographical location. The plays written by Bouzaher incorporate elements from both a range of traditions and cultures, reflecting Christopher Balme's notion of 'syncretic theatre'. The author claims that he is striving to create an 'Algerian popular culture' following decades of cultural repression by the French. Bouzaher's writing therefore decentres our understanding of censorship, decolonisation and theatrical production.

Biography

Rebecca Infield completed a PhD in French at the University of Warwick where her thesis looked at the relationship between theatre censorship and decolonisation. She then worked at the University of Leeds as a Teaching Fellow in French Colonial History. Since the end of 2023 she lives in Belgium where she teaches English and French.

Reka Polonyi

Democracy at play: making 'theatre as politics' (and not 'political theatre')

What is the relationship between democracy and playfulness? At a time when our cultural democracies are facing an existential crisis, with electoral authoritarian rule becoming far more normalised (Carethers & Press 2022), can participatory, playful and creative forms of citizen assemblies strengthen democratic resistance? This presentation examines the practice of Legislative Theatre, an artform originating in Brazil of the 1990s, that brings together community members, advocates and policymakers to identify and develop new legislation, as an experimental form of participatory democracy. I ask what role creative and imaginative play have in strengthening the deliberative, political process toward political action. Leaning on play theory and performance studies, this cross-disciplinary study stems from a disillusionment with institutional politics, and a pursuit of socially engaged theatre's potential to contribute to activist movement building. Rather than focusing on the role of 'political theatre', I explore the concept of a creative, civic practice that becomes, itself, a direct process of organising, debating, and testing legislative proposals through theatre. This presentation includes a historical overview of Legislative theatre, its ripple effects internationally, its challenging practice and its role in questioning the importance (and risks) of play in current democratic processes.

Biography

Dr Réka Polonyi is a French-Hungarian social theatre practitioner and scholar based at the University of Manchester. Her work has specialised in advocating for the rights of migrants in various settings, including prisons, community centres and refugee camps, and with various NGOs, humanitarian organisations, and grassroots activist groups. She was Associate Researcher on the (AHRC) Care Aesthetics Project led by James Thompson and was recently awarded the Bicentenary Research Fellowship (Manchester) to pursue an independent project on performances of solidarity. She was the recipient of the IFTR New Scholars Prize (2021). Réka is also a trained clown and likes to let her out whenever she can.

Rita Agatina Di Leo

Site of Resistance – A temporal and artistic struggle shared?

In a cultural landscape where artistic production is increasingly shaped by political constraints, structural precariousness and reconfigured public funding, this paper explores how an Italian performing arts festival can function as a space of protest — framing it as a territory of resistance and artistic contestation. Focusing on “Santarcangelo Festival” (Rimini), I investigate four key editions: 1985 (directed by R. Bacci), 2015 (S. Bottiroli), 2018 (E. Neklyueva and L. Gilardino), and the ongoing 2025 edition (T. Kireczuk).

Each of these editions marks a significant shift and negotiates political institutions, artistic autonomy, and audience implication: 1985 is emblematic for a violent media scandal and institutional backlash; 2015 and 2018 were marked by episodes of moral and media censorship; while 2025 — still unfolding — offers a horizon in which I also position myself, exposing the vulnerability of my own gaze and ethnographic standpoint. I consider whether these editions safeguard political bodies and minds.

Do the different directors and their programs refrain from giving them meaning? What strategies for democratizing artistic knowledge emerge through festival curation? By analyzing labor production, programming, and funding, what forms of resistance are enacted, and what potential escapes exist from the economy of debt, exceptionality, discontinuity, precariousness, and inaccessibility of artistic work? (Kunst 2024, 13–19).

This research highlights how cultural programming can act as both contestation and transgression — a space where political and aesthetic boundaries are negotiated (Bataille 1986, 36). Rather than clearly abolishing taboos, it may suspend or displace them, revealing tensions between artistic autonomy and institutional control. Instead of simply mapping policies, this study interrogates the fractures, contradictions, and unresolved conflicts shaping the relationship between performance, power — and the processes of subjectivation it imposes (Butler 1997, 45).

Biography

Rita Agatina Di Leo is a PhD candidate in the National Doctorate in “Gender Studies” (University of Bari and Sapienza University of Rome) and she is conducting a visiting period at Utrecht University, at ICON (Institute for Cultural Inquiry). Her research explores the limitations of freedom of expression in the performing arts through gender and performance studies, with a focus on marginalized bodies and censorship in XX and XXI centuries. She is an author, director, and performer, trained in dramaturgy and directing (Teatro Due, Parma and Iolanda Gazzerri School, Modena). She was awarded the Biennale Teatro of Venice 2023 with “SWAN” by Gaetano Palermo. Her publications include papers published on FrancoAngeli, Routledge, La Biennale di Venezia, Hystrio, and Engramma.

Rui Pina Coelho

Performing Hope: Utopian Theatre in an Age of Collapse

This paper examines the role of theatre in a world shaped by ecological and social crises, questioning its often-assumed exceptional ontological status. Historically, theatre has been seen as a unique art form, frequently charged with transformative powers – whether as a mirror of society's deformations, a tool for political change, or a space for utopian imagination. Today, amid a growing sense of global collapse, the notion of theatre as an agent of renewal becomes particularly relevant. Drawing from scholars such as Felipe Cervera, Isabelle Stengers, Slavoj Žižek, Siân Adiseshiah and Jill Dolan, I will explore how contemporary theatre responds to the widespread perception of living at the “end of times”. Rather than signalling an absolute end, I argue that this moment reflects a shift in social imaginaries, prompting new modes of artistic and political engagement.

This analysis focuses on the resurgence of utopian thinking in performance, particularly its impact on political theatre. Referencing works like *Utopia in Performance* (Dolan, 2008) and *Utopian Drama* (Adiseshiah, 2023), I will examine productions that engage with ecological and existential anxieties, including *Morrer pelos passarinhos* by Lígia Soares and Henrique Furtado Vieira. Using perspectives from utopian studies, ecocriticism, and theatre studies, I will argue that this performance embodies Erika Fischer-Lichte's notion of “re-enchantment”, positioning theatre as a space for imagining alternative futures. In a world where despair often overshadows hope, these artistic responses highlight theatre's potential not as a force of salvation, but to rethink and reshape collective narratives of survival and possibility.

Biography

Rui Pina Coelho (Évora, 1975) is an Assistant Professor at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, and Director of the Centre for Theatre Studies. He holds a PhD in Theatre Studies, focusing on the portrayal of violence in post-WWII British realist drama. A playwright and dramaturgist, he has collaborated regularly with TEP (Oporto Experimental Theatre) since 2010 and directed the Theatre Writing Laboratory of the D. Maria II National Theatre (2015–2019). He coordinated the book *Contemporary Portuguese Theatre: Experimentalism, Politics and Utopia* (2017). His research interests include theatre criticism, political theatre, art as resistance, Portuguese theatre history, and performance and utopia.

Sara Fontana

Archaeology of gesture and democracy of the body in the works of Virgilio Sieni

The art of Florentine choreographer and dancer Virgilio Sieni (1957) is historically organised around two main themes: the archaeology of gesture and the democracy of the body. His heterogeneous education is enriched by a particular interest in conceiving the body in a given space as a constant relationship between the here and now and the passage of time, which dictates his special attention to the concept of presence and the relationship between body and environment.

This paper focuses on his exploration of the archaeology of gesture and the democracy of the body in relation to the productions that Sieni conceived as a tribute to the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321).

Between the shows *Divina Commedia Ballo 1265* (2015) and *Paradiso* (2021), I want to give space to the various preparatory moments and phases that led to the conception of the shows, which are identified as democratic dynamics of collaboration with volunteer citizens of Florence. To this end, I will focus on how Sieni promotes in-depth discussions with artists and scientists on the interdisciplinary dimension of presence and finally creates various workshops where ordinary citizens and amateurs, together with professional dancers, can learn in a democratic context how to approach the final performance.

By highlighting these liminal occasions, which support the working process that has characterised Sieni's work as a choreographer for over twenty years, this paper aims to discuss how the contemporary dance events promoted by Sieni are in fact a shared path of active democracy, aimed at building the foundations of a united community that participates in small gestures of conscious responsibility for safeguarding the urban environment of the suburbs, true vital centres for the spread of change and cohesion that support the development of culture and the preservation of the historical tangible and intangible heritage.

Biography

Sara Fontana is a research fellow in the PRIN project *Dante in the contemporary theatrical rewritings*, directed by Prof. Leonardo Mancini at the University of Turin, where she is involved in third mission activities and in the compilation of the *Osservatorio Dante* database.

She is also in the final stages of her doctoral thesis on the contemporary reception of Dante in dance and theatre in Europe.

She has written several contributions on the subject, focusing on the comparative analysis of performances, particularly in Dante's adaptations, which reveal themselves as spies of the new contemporary dramaturgical sensibility.

Sayan Parial, Piyasha Halder

Eco-Theatre Aesthetics and Practice: Affective Spaces of Performance

Recent developments in theatre studies have shown a renewed interest in exploring the eco-theatre practices of several theatre communities or groups to initiate alternative ways of thinking about the “space” of/within theatre. This paper intends to examine two such initiatives inaugurated in West Bengal: one is Tepantar Theatre Village, situated in Satahania village, Kanksa block, Durgapur subdivision in Paschim Burdwan, developed by Ebong Amra, a group of local people, in 1994; the other is Nibhrita Purnima Natyogram, situated in Shantiniketan. The aim is to explore how these organizations practice theatre through inter/intra-acting with nature. The inclusion of such natural settings as living performative spaces within the performance also echoes what Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks discuss in their work *Site-Specific Performance* (2010), where they demonstrate how such spaces perform as much as they make actors perform. This chapter, in the same vein, attempts to bring in the performative aspect of space and critique the monolithic understanding of space in traditional or proscenium theatre practices. Such traditional theatre practices are termed by Jerzy Grotowski in his book *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968) as “rich theatre” or “total theatre” practices, which maintain the synthesis of several “creative disciplines” (literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, lighting, acting) for any performance. Overemphasis on such synthesis leads to a disconnection between the space of the performance and the text of the performance, and also discourages the audience’s participation in the performance. Te-pantar Theatre Village and Nibhrita Purnima Natyogram deconstruct the definition of “space” within such performances and create what I call “affective spaces,” which incorporate the agency to affect our perception of and interrelation with the performative text and the audience. Here, the particularities of place form various types of spaces in accordance with the performance, offering novel ways of understanding storytelling and audience-performer relationships.

Biography

Piyasa Halder holds an MA in Bengali Literature and is an independent scholar. Her research interests include Theatre and Performance Studies, Phenomenology, and Medical Humanities. She has practiced theatre as an actor with the Drama Club at the University of Gour Banga, Malda, India, and has independently directed several plays. In addition to her work in theatre, she is a professional Bharatnatyam dancer. Her scholarly focus lies in exploring the fusion of dance aesthetics with theatre, aiming to offer new possibilities for worldmaking within contemporary theatre scholarship.

Sayan Parial is working as a Contractual Teacher at the Department of English, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, India. His areas of research interest are Partition Studies, Environmental Studies, and Performance Studies.

He was invited to present his paper in an International Conference on “Shakespeare and the Sea” organized by the Royal Museums Greenwich, London, UK in the month of September, 2023. He was also invited to deliver his talk at King’s College London entitled “Thinking Disaster Through Indian Theatre and Performance: Poetics of Enactivity” in the month of September, 2024. Moreover, he is an active theatre worker at Drama Club, University of Gour Banga, India.

Sean Gregory, Heloisa Feichas

Our spaces between: re-imagining creativity and re-wilding possibilities through connecting conversations.

Our paper will explore how a co-creational, ‘three-dimensional’ approach could represent a ‘re-wilding’ of ensemble modelling, defined by the people involved and the place it’s happening at that moment in time, A family and community in one – an ‘ensemble of possibilities.’ It will consider connecting conversations as the heartbeat to creative-collaborative practice and the potential this holds as a catalyst for a cyclic and linear ecosystem of music making that (re)generates, (re)imagines, and (re)wilder. We will ask how equitable, inclusive approaches give permission for alternative, de-centred and dynamic thinking through natural human exchange by respecting differences, recognising commonalities, and crossing boundaries. This discourse will also focus on conditions enabling creative and dialogic environments, engaging people as listeners, makers, producers, and performers, challenging assumptions and extending horizons for collective imagining of new ways of living and relating. Reflections presented will be based on experiences carried out in Brazil within Projeto Conectar, which has a humanising perspective of education, based on both Paulo Freire’s ideas of liberatory praxis, autonomy, and consciousness of learners and Peter Renshaw’s ideas about creative-collaborative learning, founded on concepts of connecting conversations. To what extent can this humanistic approach be related to the challenges of current specialist performance and production arts institutions, recuperating a sense of community through a horizontal, diverse, dialogical, and sustainable manner, rather than focusing on individual practices inherited through more traditional performing arts training models? What can music, theatre, and art making learn from each other through dialogic and situational co-creational practice?

Biography

Heloisa Feichas is Associate Professor at Music School of Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil. Bachelor in Piano at UFMG, Master and PhD in Music Education at London University (IOE/UCL), Post-doc at UNESP (University of São Paulo State). Her research interests are on Sociology of Music Education, Popular Music Education, Humanising Education and Spirituality and Music Education. She has published in Brazil and internationally and her focus is on developing research about the impact of music education in social projects. Heloisa has recently established Instituto Conectar, which aims for pedagogical renewal centred on creative-collaborative music practices, towards a more progressive education that is sensitive to the context of the social projects.

Sean Gregory is Vice Principal and Director of Innovation, Engagement and Lifelong Learning at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, responsible for the development and delivery of a range of collaborative, entrepreneurial, socially engaged and wider lifelong learning programmes. This includes connecting a ‘golden thread’ of lifelong learning and creative skill-building between formal and informal under 18, undergraduate, postgraduate and adult learning programmes, including Guildhall graduate continuing professional development. He also leads Guildhall’s De-centre for Socially Engaged Practice and Research, consolidating, exploring and developing equitable, inclusive, sustainable and trans-disciplinary practices across the School, as well as through national and international partnerships.

Silvia Dumitriu

Decentering Theatrical Mimesis: Theatre As a Supplement

Theatricality is an umbrella term whose indiscriminate use in theory not only falsifies the values proper to theatre but deprives us of an instrument that would make the distinction between successful instances of theatricality and its failure. Various discourses in social sciences or theatre studies absorb the concept to elucidate phenomena that disrupt and contradict traditional expectations of truth. As such, the postmodern adopts the term uncritically, vacillating between positive and negative meanings. It applies it indiscriminately. The shallow and metaphorical use of theatricality builds an impossibility of associating meaning to the term, turning it into a negative feature. Moreover, theatricality itself becomes impossible to locate, and this state foregrounds the impossibility of even deciding whether and how theatricality as a concept might be advanced in a legitimate way. Once the sharp distinctions between the form of the work of art and its reception are dissolved, theatricality becomes impossible to locate, as it opens the possibility of an infinite semiosis (Postlewait 2003). “The supplement has not only the power of procuring an absent presence through its image, procuring it for us through the proxy (procuration) of the sign; it holds it at a distance and masters it” (Derrida 2013:155). Theatre as a supplement is exposing the realities of life however strange, illogical, or absurd they may be, transferring the forces in life and the cultural interrogations in the interplay of stage materials. Regarding this aspect, realism is an impoverishment of theatre, as by its success, it obscures the danger of making the aesthetic disappear into the “real”; secondly, it fails to accommodate the theatrical due to the bourgeois rejection of anything but psychology as “authentic”. Therefore, the rejection of bourgeois theatre is fundamental to liberating the fundamental doubleness of theatre, its authenticity and gratuity.

Biography

I am a graduate of the PhD programme at the Royal School of Speech and Drama, London (2017), with a thesis entitled *Postdramatic Theatre and Deconstruction: An Anti-Mimetic Approach To Contemporary Dramaturgy*. Currently, MA Creative Writing student at the University of Hull.

Sophie Hope

From impacting to de-centring? Exploring paradigm shifts at Guildhall School

The transformation of the Institute for Social Impact Research in the Performing Arts into the Guildhall De-Centre for Socially Engaged Practice and Research marks a significant epistemological shift. Drawing on critical perspectives from cultural democracy (Kelly, 1984 and 2023; Hope, 2017); performance studies (Bal, 2018, Boal, 1993; Joseph, 2002); decolonial theory (Bhambra et al, 2018; Tuhiwada Smith, 2012, Hall and Tandon, 2016; Santos, 2021), this presentation interrogates the conceptual and practical implications of moving from ‘impact’ to ‘de-centring’ as a framework for artistic and academic engagement.

Tracing the genealogy of ‘de-centring’ through moments of performance practice and theoretical interventions, I propose a critical mapping of how this concept challenges traditional hierarchies of knowledge production and artistic creation. How do attempts to ‘de-centre’ navigate complex terrains of institutional support, critical reception, and artistic practice? By anchoring the analysis in the specific context of Guildhall, I aim to unpack the multiple ways de-centring has been celebrated, supported, ignored, cancelled, co-opted, and de-politicised within arts and university ecosystems. My presentation critically reflects on the potential and limitations of de-centring as a transformative methodology and paradigm shift for artistic research and pedagogy.

Biography

Dr Sophie Hope’s practice-based research is often developed with others through the format of devised workshops, using role play, games, storytelling, collage and movement to exploring subjects such as art and politics, physical and emotional experiences of work, stories of socially engaged art and the ethics of employability in the creative industries. She writes, makes podcasts, manuals and sometimes exhibitions and performances. She worked at Birkbeck, University of London from 2010-2023 and is currently Lecturer in Socially Engaged Practices at Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she is co-developing the Guildhall De-Centre for Socially Engaged Practice and Research.

Sophie Proust

What new modes of governance with women at the head of theatres?

In France, in 2006 and 2009, the ministerial reports of Reine Prat, a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Culture, on gender parity in the performing arts, were published. The statistical part of these studies has the effect of a bombshell in the cultural milieu. We then learn that 92% of theatres are directed by men, 75% of the shows staged are directed by men and 76% of the texts staged are signed by men. Like what. From there, it will take time, from awareness to action. However, the recommendations of the Ministry of Culture until the implementation of a cultural policy have since acted towards a definite effort towards parity since 2016–2017. Today, we are at 42% of directors of national drama centres for women. The aim here is to report on and analyse the factors that preside over an evolution of the representation of women directors in the history of contemporary French theatre and therefore towards a more democratic situation. It will therefore be a question, among other things, of access to the means of production and the fight against sexual and sexist violence and harassment within the cultural sector, among others.

Biography

Sophie Proust is an associate professor in theatre studies, a researcher at the CEAC (University of Lille) and a journalist for Théâtre(s). She has been assistant director (Yves Beaunesne, Matthias Langhoff, Denis Marleau). Her research focuses on creative processes, cultural diversity and gender parity in the performing arts. She was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 2010 for her research in the US. In 2018, she wrote the MOOC on directing actors (Charles- Dullin School). She is responsible for the WG on creative processes at the IFTR, a founding member of ARGOS (Creative Europe 2018–2021) and editor (Theatre collection, PUS).

Stefania Lodi Rizzini

Decentering Perspectives Through Eccentric Bodies

Drawing on Teresa De Lauretis's notion and definition of the eccentric, this paper seeks to investigate the concepts of center and decentering, highlighting the relational and oppositional paradigm of knowledge and performance practice. From De Lauretis's perspective, the etymological origin of eccentric derives from the term *ex-centrum*, which signifies displacement and distancing from the center. She employs this term to define a spectrum of bodies and subjectivities that exist outside the center, understood both as the dominant culture and its margins.

De Lauretis connects the eccentric to the materiality of the body and its gendered markers. An eccentric body, in her view, corresponds to those bodies that, from a Foucauldian perspective, do not conform to the norm or, following Gloria Anzaldúa, inhabit the borderlands and the margins. These bodies undoubtedly activate a critical perspective, both aesthetically (in terms of performance) and socio-politically.

In this paper, I aim to analyze the notion of the eccentric in relation to decentering and to explore how a few artists—particularly Phia Ménard and Dom, an Italian collective—construct the relationship between center and *ex-centrum*. While approaching this theme from distinct perspectives and through different modalities, their work offers valuable insights into the dynamics of displacement and marginality in performance.

My paper will seek to examine how eccentric bodies, in contemporary contexts, challenge the center and how they can articulate new models of investigations.

Biography

Stefania Lodi Rizzini holds a Ph.D. in Theater Studies from Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3 (Paris).

Currently an independent researcher, she focuses on contemporary theater, performance, gender studies, transfeminism, female identity myths, and ecology. She is the author of various contributions and articles on collective work, such as the Palgrave Handbook of Queer and Trans Feminism in Contemporary Performance (2021) and “Sex On Stage” (Routledge, 2024), with Masculinity and Commercial Sex from the perspective of Giuliana Musso's work “Sexmachine,” and Women and Innovation (Bloomsbury 2024), with the chapter “In an out of its time, the utopian experience of Monte Verità”.

Stella Keramida

Protest and Theatricality: Democratising theatre and performance

In this paper, I am aiming to explore how protest theatre is being performed today and how it disrupts the hierarchical structures not only within theatre as a medium, but also within the broader existing socio-political power status quo. What is the impact of protest theatre in driving social and political dialogue for change today? The focus of the present paper will be on how the concept of protest contributes to essentially democratising theatre and performance. I will focus on examples of performances as a form of protest and protests as a form of performance and how they should be understood from a theatre studies point of view. I will examine how the manifestation of protest can be viewed as an aesthetic strategy and how it can expand the work of contemporary political theatre-makers and directors.

Biography

Stella Keramida is a theatre director and a scholar of theatre and performance, whose research examines the development of contemporary director's theatre and its relationship with theatre theory. Her research focuses on director's theatre, intermediality, theatrical aesthetics, political theatre and experimental/radical theatre. She holds a PhD degree from Royal Holloway, University of London (Technology, Theatrical Aesthetics and The Changing Role of the Director) and an MPhil in Greek theatre from the University of Athens. She has taught dramaturgy and theatre directing (Royal Holloway, University of London, Athens University, University of Peloponnese). Since 2015, she is lecturing at the University of Reading (Film, TV and Theatre Department).

Tara McAllister-Viel

Training Actors' Voices and 'Decolonizing' Voice Curriculum: Shifting Epistemologies

This presentation aims to add to ongoing conversations about the future of training actors' voices after #BlackLivesMatter protests [2020-2022] in the UK and US. In addressing the urgent call to 'decolonize curriculum' in UK actor training programmes, I argue that voice training curriculum in the UK has historically centered around four major master trainers whose approaches share similar key principles and practices from London-based conservatoires from 1940-1970. I argue that these practices intended to "democratise" voice training from the exclusivity of conservatoires and universities to "anyone who breathes and communicates to the world (Rodenburg, 1992)." However, despite claims of diversity and inclusivity, their overreliance on "universalism" homogenizes training not only through the training practice itself but through the problematic business models private voice trainer certifications create in relationship to UK actor training institutions. Instead of adapting pre-built training systems from voice certification programmes brought in from outside the classroom, I advocate co-authoring voice curriculum between students and tutors, centering lived experiences of the participants within the training space. Through a 'cultural voice' approach, each voice classroom can be understood as a uniquely developed composite of cultural knowledge. The shifting cultural knowledge of the individuals that make up the learning/teaching strategies is an ongoing, ever-changing, dynamic co-authorship of training curriculum between students and teachers. In this way, 'culture' becomes one of the fundamental 'materials' of training. This presentation adds to an epistemological shift in current mainstream popular voice training approaches which demands that trainers and the institutions they work for (re)consider the dynamic relationship of co-creating a 'decolonized curriculum' together.

Biography

Tara McAllister-Viel is currently Head of Voice and Speech at East 15 Acting School, University of Essex, Southend campus. She has been a professional actor and voice director for the past 30 years working across Chicago, Seoul, Berlin and London. She earned her PhD from University of Exeter, England, U.K. and her MFA-Acting degree from the Asian/Experimental Theatre Program, University of Wisconsin, USA. Her single-authored monograph *Training Actors' Voices: Towards an Intercultural/Interdisciplinary Approach* (Routledge, 2019) details her research areas with Korean p'ansori, voice and culture and voice pedagogy in conservatoire training.

Tatiana Vakhatova

Direct and Indirect Audience Engagement in Tiago Rodrigues' Performances

My proposal focuses on the work of Tiago Rodrigues and how, through his performances, he challenges traditional hierarchies at the theatre and redefines the political dimensions of performance. He transforms the relationship dynamics between the stage and the audience by proposing different methods of audience engagement.

In *By Heart*, Rodrigues directly engages the audience by inviting 10 volunteers on stage to learn Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 by heart. The performance alternates between the collective memorization of the sonnet and narratives in which Rodrigues evokes literary figures of Soviet resistance, such as Boris Pasternak, Joseph Brodsky, and others. Each example illustrates how the process of memorization and, more broadly, memory itself, become a political gesture against censorship, and a powerful tool for democracy.

Conversely, *Catarina and the Beauty of Killing Fascists* employs indirect engagement. Rodrigues presents a family living in contemporary Lisbon who maintain a tradition in which every woman in the family must kill a "fascist" — defined as someone whose inaction has allowed violence against women to persist. Through dialogues reflecting polarized viewpoints and a final monologue, Rodrigues forces each audience member to confront a moral dilemma: can violence ever be justified in the name of democracy?

Both approaches question traditional roles of actors and spectators in the performance. Direct engagement transforms the spectators into co-creators, while indirect engagement assigns them the role of active interpreters, entrusting them with the task of constructing the meaning from what they witness. By doing so, Tiago Rodrigues decentralizes authorship and redistributes the power within the theatrical space — process that reflects democratic values and reimagines the political power of performance.

Biography

I hold a Master's degree in Performing Arts from the Université Côte d'Azur. My Master's Dissertation focused on the stage adaptation of three novels by American writer Don DeLillo (*Players*, *Mao II*, *The Names*) as directed by Julien Gosselin. Since 2022, I have been a PhD student in Performing Arts at the Université Côte d'Azur. My research interests center on contemporary theatre, with a particular focus on the work of Portuguese theatre director Tiago Rodrigues. I explore how his artistic practice responds to societal, economic, and political issues, as well as the creative methods he employs to engage with these themes.

Theresa Spielmann

Palliative Dramaturgy: Recentring Loss in Eco-Theatre

This paper explores the recent shift in German theatre from an explicit focus on climate change to a centring on themes of death, loss, and grief within contexts of climate change. A few years ago, productions such as Rimini Protokoll's *Weltklimakonferenz* (2015) and Thomas Köck's *Klimatologie* (2016–2018) unambiguously addressed climate change. Christian Rakow's recent review of the jury's picks for the Berliner Theatertreffen suggests that eco-theatre is less prominent today. I argue that rather than a disappearance of climate-related themes, there is a shift in how these issues are represented, echoing the complexity of climate change itself. Theatre studies scholars, dramaturgs and theatre makers altogether have long grappled with how to (re-)present ecology on stage, addressing challenges such as the anthropocentric tendencies of theatre and the overwhelming scale of climate change. In response, thinkers like Una Chaudhuri and Lisa Woynarski have proposed and observed various approaches, such as the climate lens playbook, ecodramaturgy or a more general interest in site-specific performances. More recently, Lynn T. Musiol and Christian Tschirner, founders of dramaturx, called for a "palliative dramaturgy," which embraces grief as a necessary mode of dealing with climate change. They suggest that by centring sorrow, theatre can confront life's finiteness and regain agency, avoiding the traps of trivialisation and hopelessness. I attend to this suggestion by turning to a particularly prominent example — Elfriede Jelinek's *Asche* (2024) — arguing that this shift is already underway. By parallelly narrating individual death and planetary death, Jelinek bridges the gap between mourning for individual human loss and disenfranchised ecological grief. Ultimately, as I will conclude, rather than decentering eco-theatre, I trace that Germany's stages are centring ecological sorrow, signalling a demand that all forms of death, not just individual human loss, become the focus of our collective grief.

Biography

Theresa Spielmann (she/they) is a PhD student at the Universiteit Antwerpen, where she is involved in the "Performing Ends" research project funded by FWO. Originally from Germany, Theresa completed an MPhil in Theatre Studies at the University of Warwick before relocating to Belgium. During and after their undergraduate studies in Theatre Studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Theresa worked as a theatre maker, collaborating with the theatre collective Büro Grandezza. Notably, she served as the creative co-director for The 2051 Munich Climate Conference (2021) and as Editor for the subsequent publication *The 2051 Munich Climate Conference: Future Visions of Climate Change*.

Theron Schmidt

Decentering the researcher through affective attunement

Advocates of ‘grounded theory’ within such diverse fields as social sciences and medicine argue for an approach to research that begins from observation, constructing theories and categories out of what emerges, rather than setting out to prove a theory or defining what will ‘count’ as evidence before the research begins. But a problem remains: Even apparently open-ended forms of data-gathering—observations, interviews, measurements—all presume a set of parameters that are to be measured, subjects who are within the scope of enquiry and those without, and questions that are relevant. But neither is it a satisfactory approach to begin with no method at all and to start with just aimless wandering and observation, as this can reinforce inherited and invisibilized preferences and dispositions toward what is worthy of observation in the first place.

I argue that performance-based methodologies can address this problem through the use of creative constraints that decenter the subject-position of the observer/researcher by externalizing these choices into an arbitrary score or iterative method. Such a decentering of the subject is also a theoretical position argued for by affect theory, which emphasizes the ways in which our experience is shaped by affective flows and forces that are outside the capacities of comprehension by the conscious, rational self. Techniques of ‘affective attunement’ developed within the artistic realm – such as those inspired by Situationist psychogeography, but now expanded in ways that recognize some of the privileges and biases of these practitioners – can open us to the invisible. As a case study, I discuss Ant Hampton’s *Borderline Visible* (2023), which invites readers/listeners to navigate non-linear pathways through a book of text and images, guided by an audio track, that reconstruct Hampton’s experience of tracing paths of migration and violence that transect Europe.

Biography

Theron Schmidt is Assistant Professor at Utrecht University, Netherlands, and works internationally as an artist, teacher, and writer. He is a founding co-convener of the Performance Philosophy network and an Editor of the journal *Performance Philosophy*. He is also an Editor of *Global Performance Studies* and an Associate Editor of *Performance Research*. He assembled *Agency: A Partial History of Live Art* (Intellect 2019), a collection of interviews with almost 50 artists, curators, and thinkers in the field of contemporary performance (winner of the 2021 TaPRA Editing Prize), and is the author of *The Theatricalists: Making Politics Appear* (Northwestern University Press).

Tiago Ivo Cruz

Decentralisation: how Portuguese independent theatre groups aimed to foster democracy after the Carnation Revolution and its institutional consequences

Following the 1974 Carnation Revolution, independent theatre companies asserted themselves as a public service of democracy in Portugal. This was achieved not through the implementation of new public policies but rather through the transformation of existing regime institutions. Specifically, the Theatre Fund, previously dedicated to financing established theatre enterprises, was repurposed as a funding mechanism for independent theatre groups.

Concentrated primarily in Lisbon and Porto, the need to decentralize theatrical production and access emerged as a key programmatic challenge, which independent theatre companies embraced. They actively participated in cultural mobilization and civic action campaigns initiated by the Armed Forces Movement (1974–75), bringing their performances to diverse locations across the country. This initiative highlighted the significant cultural disparity between the capital and the provinces, a recognized problem requiring both critical reflection and action. However, the concept of decentralization was interpreted and implemented in diverse ways by different theatre groups. While Mário Barradas proposed a national cultural policy based on decentralized dramatic centers, modeled after the French system, this proposal was only partially realized, as other groups advocated for alternative strategies. Between 1974 and 1984, in the absence of a coherent national decentralization policy by the State, theatre groups themselves took the initiative to relocate or establish companies in various regions.

In this presentation, drawing upon archival documents and research conducted within the Arthe – Archiving Theatre project and the Museu Nacional do Teatro e da Dança, I aim to demonstrate how the institutional uniqueness of Portuguese independent theatre within the European context emerged from the complex political landscape of the revolutionary period.

Biography

Tiago Ivo Cruz is a PhD Candidate at School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon with FCT scholarship. He is also a researcher at the Centre for Theatre Studies and Museu Nacional de Teatro e da Dança, as well as ARTHE – Archiving Theatre.

Timmy De Laet

Distributing Dance Heritages:
Authorship, Transmission, Values

This presentation will propose the notion of ‘distributing dance heritages’ as a potentially fruitful avenue to develop new perspectives on dance heritage by considering how the decentring of choreographic legacies may lead to more democratic forms of heritage in contemporary dance and beyond. Whereas heritage studies have traditionally focused on social forms of dance (such as folk dance, community practices, rituals, etc.), contemporary dance studies have been predominantly oriented towards artistic forms of dance. Even while dance scholars have been expanding their focus to include choreographic practices not necessarily presented on a theatrical stage, a sustained interdisciplinary dialogue between the fields of dance studies and heritage studies is still lacking.

I will argue that, through the concept of ‘distributing dance heritages’, it is possible to create a bridge between these research domains and to scrutinise how contemporary dance studies can draw on findings from existing research on intangible heritage while also articulating how contemporary dance requires new pathways for building a sustainable heritage approach specific to this segment of the dance field. This approach necessitates a critical reconsideration of predominant conceptions of authorship, practices of transmission, as well as the sociopolitical values associated with dance heritage. To this end, this presentation will build on some of the preliminary findings obtained within the Horizon Europe project ‘DanceMap: Charting European Dance Heritage at Home and Abroad’, led by Bureau Ritter (Berlin) and involving a consortium of more than 15 international partners. Based on these findings, I will explore to what extent contemporary dance (as distinct from modern dance or social dance) might need to pursue a decentred and distributed model of sharing and transmission if it wants to secure its future in democratic ways that also reflect some of the most important values at the core of what we currently call ‘contemporary dance’.

Biography

Timmy De Laet is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance Studies at the University of Antwerp and a Lecturer at the BA and MA dance program of the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp. Timmy is the co-founder and coordinator of ‘CoDa | Cultures of Dance – Research Network for Dance Studies’, funded by the Research Foundation Flanders. He is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance* (published by EASTAP and University of Groningen Press) and serves on the editorial boards of the performing arts journals *FORUM+* and *Documenta*. He has worked as a dramaturg with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui for the productions ‘3S’ (2020) and ‘Vlaemsch (chez moi)’ (2022).

Tomasz Wiśniewski

Complicité: Peripheries and Margins

Even though they are based in London, Complicité has expressed interest in the peripheral and the marginal ever since their establishment in 1983. Whereas collaboration with both theatre-makers and institutions from various parts of the world developed into a trademark of the company, its tours did not avoid the city of Zenica in Bosnia, Thessaloniki in Greece, and suburban areas of Santiago de Chile. Fascination with the world beyond cultural centres is also striking in Simon McBurney’s collection of essays “Who You Hear It from,” as well as in the stage geographies depicted in “The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol,” “Mnemonic,” and “Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead.” The recent move of McBurney’s family from Kentish Town, London, to Stroud, Gloucestershire, may well epitomise his attraction to decentralised areas.

Balanced and integrated as such an attitude may seem, it posed numerous challenges to the functioning of the company in the traditional – logocentric – environment of British theatre in the 1980s and 1990s. Scepticism towards Marcello Magni’s Italian accent when he played Autolycus in *The Winter’s Tale* is as emblematic as the initial marginalisation of Complicité by and in British scholarship. Peter Brook put it succinctly: “The English have a fine, long and wonderful tradition. Simon McBurney and Complicité are not part of it.”

The paper profiles the above observations in view of the following premises: 1) that Complicité has participated in the decentralisation of the paradigm of British theatre since the 1980s; 2) that Complicité has contributed to the dissemination of innovative methods of theatre-making in a British context; 3) and that Complicité has democratised the rigid hierarchical structures that exist in Europe’s creative environment.

Biography

Tomasz Wiśniewski is Head of the Department of Performing Arts Studies. He is the author of *Complicité, Theatre and Aesthetics* (2016), *Kształt literacki dramatu Samuela Becketta* (2006), and has (co-)edited over twenty academic publications, including *Włodzimierz Staniewski and the Phenomenon of “Gardzienice”* (2022). In the years 2021–2024, he led the projects *Theatre – Literature – Management* and *The Geography of the Imagination: Irish Theatre*. In the years 2025–2027, his research is focused on *Polish Echoes in Complicité* and it is supported by a grant awarded by the National Science Centre. His current research includes also Irish theatre, *Song of the Goat Theatre*, and commercial semiotics.

Tomaž Toporišič

Decentring and distributing the positions of power in contemporary performing arts

This paper delves deep into the concepts of devising methods of contemporary performance landscapes aiming to redefine theatrical and performative language stressing the ideas of decentring and distributing the positions of power. Using examples of contemporary practitioners (Milo Rau, Oliver Frlić, Romeo Castellucci, Pippo Delbono, Brett Bailey, She She Pop) we will try to show how these visionaries view art as a means to decentre, reshape and transform our perception of the world while addressing the complexities of the I-Other relationship, how they destabilize the social distribution of power reflected in the theatre.

Moreover, we seek to elucidate how subversive contemporary performing arts in the context of colonial and neo-colonial regimes empower audiences to challenge prevailing narratives and power structures and underline the mechanisms of inadequate sharing of cultural capital (Bourdieu) in today's societies. We will explore the mechanisms of "decentring", which involve the circulation and increased interconnectedness between peripheries, either with or without their integration into cultural centres. Our exploration will also shine a spotlight on contemporary theatrical works that investigate how memory and history are assembled and constructed through performance. They challenge traditional notions of performance, pushing the boundaries of audience experiences and serving as arenas for negotiating hybrid identities, and cultural and aesthetic memory.

We will try to show how non-hierarchical artistic communities and groups are seeking to delve into the dynamic interplay between theatrical and societal elements, creating conditions for new understandings of decentring, distribution and democratising of today's societies. How they stress the interrelation between the relevance of how a production is constructed and where it is offered to the audience. Thus, we will aim to illustrate how the subversive approaches to performance foster a productive, albeit often ambivalent, relationship between art and activism. These artists place their belief in staging representation within theatrical and environmental settings as "symbolic institutions" (Milo Rau) while producing projects of activism. Some of them contend that true politics require a departure from the institution of art, weaving insurrectionary imagination into the fabric of everyday life while democratising the reception and distribution of performative practices.

Biography

A dramaturge and theatre theoretician. A professor in Drama and Performance Studies at the Academy of Theatre and Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana and an associate member of the Slovene Academy of Science and Arts. An author of six books on contemporary performing arts. His latest essays: *Deconstructive Readings of the Avant-Garde Tradition in Post-Socialist Retro-Avant-Garde Theatre* ([in:] *The Aesthetics of Matter: Modernism, the Avant-Garde and Material Exchange*, 2013), *Theatre displeasure touching society's raw nerves: Castellucci and Frlić*. *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 2025; *Slovene historical avant-garde and Europe in crisis*. *Theatralia*, 2022. His primary interest is to put in dialogue theory and practice.

Varvara Sklez

Fragile, Elusive, Sensitive: Positionality of Contemporary Russian Migrant Artists

The beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the mobilization announced by Vladimir Putin in September 2022 marked two waves of large-scale exodus of Russian theatre artists – among others – from the country. Over the past three years, the geography and economy of Russian-language theatre and playwriting have transformed into a transnational network of initiatives and collaborations, often sustained by unpaid labour or occasional grants. At the same time, it has turned out to be very far removed from the Soviet-era model, in which artistic processes at home and abroad were separated by an 'iron curtain,' the crossing of which usually meant the impossibility of return. Projects such as the Lubimovka Festival and Theatre of Resistance are built based on horizontal networks with participants located both in Russia and abroad, anonymized and not, distributed across different countries and between online and offline. This organizational structure, along with artists and curators often working on a volunteer basis, on the one hand, makes it less vulnerable in the face of the Russian authorities, and on the other hand increases even more the precarity of artists in emigration or those who remain in Russia but cannot get a paid job there. I will examine these entanglements and contradictions through the example of one artistic biography of theatre director and curator Ivan Demidkin. I will take a closer look at his work on the Fragile festival in St Petersburg and Moscow, Russia, in 2024-2025 (with Artem Tomilin) and the site-specific theatre festival Place - Action, which took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in September 2024 (with Olcha Shchetinina and Roman Khuzin). I am going to explore the creative constraints and possibilities resulting from Demidkin's position, excluded from Russian theatre institutions and not permanently included in foreign institutions, yet continuing to work in both contexts. I am going to argue that this particularly vulnerable and precarious position between several countries allows, however, to maintain sensitivity to more than one social and cultural context.

Biography

Varvara Sklez is a Senior Graduate Teaching Assistant and an Early Career Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of Warwick (UK). Her doctoral research, supported by the International Chancellor's Scholarship at Warwick, titled "Aesthetics of Effort: Performing Difficult Past in Contemporary Russian Theatre," examines how contemporary Russian theatre engaged with memory and resistance till 2022. She was published on Russian theatre, public history, and social memory. She is currently working on the edited volume "Languages and Forms of Resistance: Contesting Russia's Nationalism" with Yana Meerzon and Julia Listengarten.

Vito Lentini

The Dante Project. Wayne McGregor and “The Divine Comedy”

Commissioned as a tribute to Dante Alighieri on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of his death in 1321, Wayne McGregor’s “The Dante Project” is created by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House in 2021, in co-production with the Paris Opera where it was performed in May 2023.

The show explores with originality the journey imagined by Dante Alighieri, combining adventure, introspection, and inspiration. The poem tells the story of Dante’s journey through the three realms of the afterlife and McGregor’s approach translates into dance some significant intertextual themes of the “Commedia”.

My paper aims to clarify the choices made by the composer Thomas Adès, the dramatic perspectives imagined by Uzma Hameed and the choreographic language adopted by the Resident Choreographer of the Royal Ballet. I will also explore how in this ballet the complex themes of “The Divine Comedy” are imagined considering different points of view: physical, emotional and intellectual.

Biography

Vito Lentini is Professor of Philosophy and Human Sciences. He teaches Pedagogy and History of Dance at the Accademia Teatro alla Scala. He is a Research Fellow at the University of Turin and participates in a research project of the Department of Cultural and Environmental Heritage of the University of Milan studying the archive of Luciana Novaro. His research focuses on the development of the art of ballet between the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly on Nureyev’s repertoire and the British ballet. He is journalist, dance and ballet critic, and editor-in-chief of the magazine “Sipario” and he writes about dance and ballet for “Il Sole 24 Ore” and “La Scala magazine”

Performances

Friday 5 September, 5–6.45pm | Studio Theatre

Moa Salin, Funmi Adewole Elliott

One bucket of PEACE

Biographies

Moa Matilda Sahlin (born 1974 in Gävle, Sweden) reactivates postmodern/contemporary practice theories through a critical exercise of queer femmes' development, in her own body and societal corporeality. Her dance classes and choreographic practice, insist on the central role of art in society. She repeatedly offers up the hopeful serpentine paths towards the ongoing dream of Utopia. MOA kompani, is a proposal to work through choreographic methods in projects, networks, choreographies and conversations. Community centred organisations models started with Dansbyrån 2006–2018 and the dance bar was; Funmi Adewole, Inta Balode, Kate Elswit, Åsa Holtz, Rani Nair, Jannine Rivel, Petra Kupperts, Steinunn Ketlisdottir and others are and have been influential colleagues. With its new perspectives, formal experiments and bodily updates. The choreography "Curious on the border" was made in her master's degree in choreography in 2005 London, Laban, and was part of the dance biennial in Gothenburg in 2006.

MOA kompani do since the one new choreography per year.

Funmi Adewole Elliott a performer, dramaturge, and academic with a passion for exploring the intersection of movement and storytelling. My journey in the arts began at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, where I studied for a B.A. in Languages during the 1980s. As the artistic director of the university's poetry society, The Thursday Group, I discovered the joy of blending language and movement in performance. After graduating, I worked as a freelance journalist, radio actress, and Associate Producer with the late Michael Enahoro's Prime TV before relocating to Britain in the 1990s. In the UK, I embraced a career in the performing arts, spending a decade touring with African dance drama and physical/visual theatre companies. My credits include performances with Ritual Arts, Horse and Bamboo Mask and Puppetry Company, Artistes-in-Exile, Adzido Pan-African Dance Ensemble, Mushango African Dance and Music Company, and the contemporary dance company, The Cholmondeleys. In 2013, I published *Sea Salt in the City*, a collection of poems that began during my time in Ibadan. Alongside my performance career, I contributed to the development of the dance sector through my voluntary work with the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (now part of One Dance UK), writing for its newsletters and spearheading initiatives for sector development. Additionally, through a portfolio career, I built an international reputation as an arts facilitator, dance advocate, and dramaturge.

Alexandra Oliveira

Fragments of a Collective Look

Biography

Actress, director and theatre researcher. Alexandra was born in Brazil, did her Master's degree at the University of Rio de Janeiro, acted in several performances and, in Germany, did her PhD in Theatre at the University of Frankfurt with the research 'Bertolt Brecht and Theatre Photography: aesthetic and political involvement', as well as being the artistic director of the Teatro Lusotaque collective at the University of Cologne. Currently, in Lisbon, where she is undertaking her post-doctorate, she is a researcher at the University of Lisbon's Centre for Theatre Studies, where she coordinates the 'Brecht in Focus' study group and is the founder of the Teatro do Imigrante theatre group.

Christina Schmutz

Opening Up a Sliding Door

Biography

Studied Economy and Philology in Freiburg (Germany). In 1998 moved to Barcelona with a scholarship on contemporary dramaturgy. In Barcelona puts on stage contemporary plays of German writers such as Falk Richter, Igor Bauersima, Sybille Berg, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Anja Hilling, and Elfriede Jelinek (Festival de Sitges, Nau Ivanow, Espai Escènic Joan Brossa, GREC Festival, Videoarte loop Festival, Teatre Tantarantana). Since the beginning of 2009 in conjunction with theatre director and theorist Frithwin Wagner-Lippok initiates research and stage projects on the critical in theatre. Since then, also pursues theoretical-practical investigation of new theatre forms through various free projects. PhD in Theatre Studies (UAB Barcelona). Interdisciplinary works in museums and lectures on new theatre forms at congresses and universities. Works as professor at Institut del Teatre Barcelona, had of the theory area and research group ESPCTRA.

Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh

Critical Conversations with Medea and Carmen

Biography

Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh is a Professor of Dramatic Writing at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where she teaches collaboration, equitable practices, and dramaturgy on the MA in Opera Making and Writing. She is Guildhall's first Postgraduate Researcher of Practice as Research in Libretto and is writing a new Carmen set in a future, metamodern, post-gender apartheid Iran. At The Oxford School of Drama she is their inaugural Associate Artist teaching Collaboration, Dramaturgy and working on Strategy and Policy. As a transdisciplinary international multi-award-winning artist and writer, she is also recognised as an internationally experienced moderator, facilitator, coach, and mentor.

Long tables, Hackathons, Interventions

Evi Stamatiou

Ethnoacting in VR for Resilience in Acting Students

Thursday 4 September, 4–5pm
TV Studio

Ethnoacting in VR invites educators to decenter student support wellbeing while maintaining professional boundaries and without replacing trained mental health professionals. Participants who have previously tested the intervention—particularly the acting students—found the VR approach engaging and enjoyable, highlighting its potential for further development. Such findings invite scholars and pedagogues to explore the potential of acting as a means for developing essential soft skills.

The intervention responds to the growing recognition of mental health challenges in higher education has led to a global emphasis on holistic pedagogical approaches. In the performing arts, particularly following the resurgence of the Me Too and Black Lives Matter movements, traditional actor training methods—often associated with harmful practices—are increasingly being replaced by approaches that prioritise student wellbeing. This shift is especially critical for acting students, who experience higher rates of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and unhealthy lifestyle habits compared to their peers in other performing arts disciplines and the general population. Research highlights the importance of resilience-building to help acting students manage mental health challenges within training programmes and prepare for the high-pressure industry they will enter.

Biography

Evi Stamatiou is a practitioner-researcher specialising in actor training. With two decades of international experience as an actor and creative, she has received prestigious awards and funding, including support from the British Science Festival, Arts Council England, and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. She is a Senior Lecturer in Acting for Stage and Screen at the University of East London and holds a PhD from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London. A Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Evi also serves as Chair of the Acting Program at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

Her research and publications explore inclusive actor training, the relationship between acting and human development, and the intersection of acting with technologies, higher education, psychology, and nursing.

Guildhall Production Studio

Deepfaking Dramaturgy

Thursday 4 September, 4.15–5.45pm
Rehearsal Room 1

Rather than a traditional hackathon focused on coding or building tech solutions, this session invites collaborative, creative exploration using AI tools as thought partners, in a ‘Promptjam’. Participants will respond to provocations through rapid, generative experimentation using tools like ChatGPT and Runway, much like a jam session for ideas, text, and imagery.

This will be a hands-on creative lab exploring how generative AI is decentring authorship, access, and craft in the performing arts. Participants will work in small groups to respond to themed provocations (e.g. plagiarism, loss of skill, new creative opportunities), using AI tools as co-creators to write, generate images, and imagine speculative performance futures together.

The aim is to foster playful yet critical reflection on how AI is reshaping creative labour and training, balancing rapid making with deeper questions of ethics, equity, and power, and tying directly into the conference themes. It’s open to everyone, no technical skills required, just curiosity.

About Guildhall Production Studio

Guildhall Production Studio are an award-winning, full-service production studio, employing advanced technologies to deliver captivating results in the public and private sector, bridging creative and commercial projects.

Working in multiple disciplines across performing arts and technology, they explore the future of live events and immersive experiences. They undertake Research & Development with industry partners to inform the cutting-edge work they produce for clients and audiences.

Dan Shorten, Creative Director of Guildhall Production Studio, is an award-winning multimedia designer and consultant. He is a digital specialist with experience across a range of platforms and media including 3D design, projection mapping, interactive art, VR, AR and XR. He is an educator with 18 years’ experience teaching in Higher Education and a passionate advocate of new and emerging technologies.

Dr Leslie Deere, Postdoctoral Researcher at Guildhall Production Studio, is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist and researcher. She is an audiovisual specialist with experience across sound installations, immersive environments, and embodied performance technologies including VR, XR and interactive media. Her research explores how emerging technologies enhance wellbeing and artistic expression.

Phoebe Patey-Ferguson, with Joe Parslow, Ben Buratta, Stephen Farrier

Long Table D-Liberations: how Queer Nightlife Performance Decentres, Democratises, Distributes and Destroys

Thursday 4 September, 4.15–5.45pm
Rehearsal Room 2

A Long Table is not just a methodology—it's a provocation that transforms polite dinner conversation into a radical space of exchange and confrontation. Like the most transformative queer nightlife, the Long Table can shatter hierarchies, disrupt expectations, and create a space where multiple ways of knowing, being, and performing collide with explosive potential.

Our proposed Long Table explores how queer nightlife performance across European contexts engages with the conference themes of decentring, distributing, and democratising—while adding our own fourth D: destroying.

The conversational menu:

- Decentring: How do queer nightlife performances violently reject and subvert dominant narratives about “legitimate” performance? How do these performances actively decentre both heteronormative cultural expectations and homonormative politics that have attempted to sanitise LGBTQ+ performance across different European contexts?
- Distributing: How are underground knowledges, radical practices, and aesthetic insurrections distributed across queer nightlife networks that operate in the shadows of European borders? How do performers and audiences distribute resources in deliberate opposition to capitalist modes of exchange?
- Democratising: How does queer nightlife performance democratise access by creating spaces where institutional validation becomes not just irrelevant but an active target of critique? What happens when democratisation means not just inclusion but the total reimagining of who gets to produce, be in and take up space?
- Destroying: What must be dismantled before meaningful reconstruction can begin? How does queer nightlife performance engage in necessary acts of symbolic and actual destruction—of binaries, of respectable politics, of institutional gatekeeping, and of borders that fragment queer communities across Europe?

This discussion invites those gathered to excavate how economic precarity and social marginalisation across European contexts create not just challenges but fuel for radical queer nightlife spaces. We will explore the forms of knowledge that emerge when bodies gather in defiance of normative expectations and how different cultural contexts shape distinctive approaches to performance as pleasure, experimentation, resistance, and survival.

Biographies

Dr Phoebe Patey-Ferguson is a Lecturer at Rose Bruford College (Kent, UK) teaching Theatre & Social Change, Contemporary & Popular Performance and is the Programme Director for MA Queer Performance. Their research expertise is in the social context of contemporary performance, primarily festivals and clubs, with a focus on queer and trans practice. Phoebe is the co-editor of a special issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* on Live Art (2024) and co-convenor of the Queer Futures Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Research. They frequently collaborate with organisations to deliver public talk programmes, including Buzzcut Festival, the Live Art Development Agency (LADA), and Scottee & Friends. They are co-chair of the board of Duckie and have previously worked as a producer with the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), In Between Time (IBT), and VFD, and are a co-founder of Live Art Club London.

Dr Joe Parslow is a researcher, writer and producer whose works centres on queer performance, with a focus on popular forms such as drag, cabaret and burlesque. Their current research includes a project involving Artificial Intelligence and drag performance as part of The Zizi Project in collaboration with Me The Drag Queen and AI artist Jake Elwes, and a monograph in development exploring Contemporary Queer Hopes. They have worked and continue to work closely with London's drag and cabaret performance scene through informal mentorship and occasionally still producing events alongside Me The Drag Queen, including the infamous Not Another Drag Competition.

Dr Ben Buratta is the Head of Acting and Performance at Rose Bruford College. As a theatre maker, director, and researcher, his work spans traditional venues like The Bush Theatre and Birmingham Rep alongside alternative spaces including dancefloors and nightclubs. He founded Outbox, collaborating with LGBTQIA+ artists to create performances such as GROOVE (nominated for three Off-West End awards) and And The Rest of Me Floats (included in the V&A's National Video Archive of Performance). His published research examines embodied queer pedagogies in performance, with his work on HIV narratives featured in the special edition of *Theatre Topics* on queer pedagogy.

Prof Stephen Farrier is an academic and theatre maker whose work focuses on queer performance, popular performance forms and the ethics of research. Through a long-lasting fascination with the representation of identity, he is drawn to lesser told narratives. His research focuses on creating space for erased, invisible and silenced voices and the prominence and accessibility of queer performance. He has published widely on queer performance and has presented academic work extensively in international settings.

Disrupt and De-Centre

Disrupting and de-centring in the arts institution

Friday 5th September, 5.15–6.45pm
Rehearsal Room 2

Join members of the De-Centre and Disrupt for a Long Table discussion sharing motivations and challenges to decentring in arts institutions, universities, and conservatories.

Given the Audre Lorde mantra that is often quoted: “the master’s tools will never dismantle the masters’ house”, what potential is there for disruption, decolonisation and decentring from the position of an institution? Using performance artist Lois Weaver’s method of the Long Table, we invite an open, honest conversation about the possibilities and limits of working in de-centred, disruptive ways. What motivates you to work in this way? How is your research applying de-centring and disrupting methodologies? What hurdles and barriers are you up against when carrying out this work? Join us for a dinner table conversation where talk is the only course.

Biographies

Billy Mann is originally from Liverpool and worked as a national magazine journalist for more than 30 years before suffering a stroke at age 53. For the past 13 years he has been a member of Headway East London, a charity that supports people affected by brain injury and an artist with their Submit to Love Studio. He was part of the steering group that put together the Differently Various exhibition at the Barbican’s Curve gallery in August 2023 and has continued his work on public engagement projects for Headway and in workshops and conferences on power sharing and co-production. He supports Liverpool FC and uses football a tool for discussing other types of collaborative working.

Divya Satwani (she/her) is a Producer, Artist, Facilitator, Public Speaker, and Somatic Coach whose work is rooted in decolonial practice, social justice, and championing marginalised voices. The foundation of her practice involves deep relationship-building with artists, communities, organisations, and allies to dismantle and disrupt oppressive systems, to create more inclusive, equitable, and joyous creative spaces. By integrating somatic practices, Divya highlights the body-mind connection and its role in unlocking creativity, intuition, and collective well-being. Divya has worked passionately across programmes, festivals, events, and grantmaking with organisations such as the Barbican Centre, Battersea Arts Centre, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Royal Academy of Dance, Apples & Snakes, Science Gallery London, Mercury Music Awards, and O2 and has been featured on radio and podcast with BBC Radio London, BBC Asian Network and Infacts Events.

Dr Tōmei June Bacon (she/they) publishes under the name T. J. Bacon and creates artwork using the moniker tjb. She is a leading voice in performance and visual art through queer phenomenological approaches, with a focus on multiplicity, embodiment, and temporality. She is the author of *An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Performance Art: SELF/s* (Intellect/University of Chicago Press, 2022/24) and *The Phenomenology of Blood in Performance Art* (Routledge, 2025), with a third book in development focused on trans+ lives, art, and activism. Her interdisciplinary research spans transgender studies, queer and crip theory, disaster studies, and speculative futures, with applications in visual art, performance, and XR technologies. As an artist, her practice includes durational performance, site-responsive installation, sculpture, sonic collaboration, and environmental intervention.

Tōmei is Artistic Director of Tempting Failure, curating radical performance and marginalised voices. She has produced socially engaged programmes with Amnesty International, Ealing Foodbank, SOS Méditerranée, and Mind. As an educator, she teaches across visual art, experimental theatre, and performance, centring the body as praxis and inclusive pedagogies of care. She co-originated the Performance for Futures methodology and leads workshops on digital media, embodiment, and post-performance artefact. She is affiliated with the Guildhall De-Centre and Ethics Review Board, supervises PhD candidates, and welcomes doctoral enquiries in queer practice-as-research. Tōmei also founded the Trans+ Virtual Centre of Excellence (TVCE), a global network for trans+ scholarship and advocacy.

See Jo Chard’s bio on page 75.

See Sophie Hope’s bio on page 62.

Keynote Chairs & Round Table Participants

Alia Alzougbi

Alia is Artistic Director & CEO of Shubbak. She is a cultural strategist, artist and facilitator working at the intersection of art and social and environmental justice. Her practice uses the arts to interrogate the fundamental causes of inequality and explore alternative modes of understanding the world and being in it, foregrounding dignity for all beings and Earth, our only home.

She has worked with national and international organisations as an artist and storyteller to create critical encounters in education and the arts towards collective liberation, from local corner shops to world-renowned museums.

Alia is a Chevening Scholar, a Clore Fellow and Associate, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Prior to joining Shubbak, she was Director of the global citizenship education organisation Global Learning London.

Andy Lavender

Andy is Provost & Vice Principal (Academic) and Professor of Theatre & Performance at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London. Before joining Guildhall, Andy was Head of Theatre & Performance Studies, University of Warwick; and before that Head of the School of Arts, University of Surrey. Andy's writing includes the monographs *Documentary Theatre and Performance* (Bloomsbury Methuen 2024) and *Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement* (Routledge 2016), along with articles and chapters on contemporary theatre and performance.

Work as editor/co-editor includes *Performance Research* (On Protest), 27:3–4, 2023; *Lightwork: Texts on and from Collaborative Multimedia Theatre* (Intellect, 2022); and *4x45 | Neoliberalism, Theatre and Performance* (Routledge, 2021). Andy was artistic director of the theatre/performance company Lightwork, making devised, multimedia work between 1999–2018. He is a member of the Universities UK/Jisc Research Licensing Strategy Group, the Arts and Humanities Research Council's 'cressida nexus' research infrastructure group, the editorial board of the *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* (Routledge) and an Associate Editor of the journal *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* (Routledge). He has a sitting role as Subject Specialist: Theatre for the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications.

Clare Finburgh Delijani

Clare Finburgh Delijani is the recipient of a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2023–6) and works in the Department of Theatre and Performance at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has written and edited many books and articles on theatre from the French-speaking world and the UK, including special issues of *Théâtre/Public on postcolonial theatre* (2023); *Watching War on the Twenty-First-Century Stage: Spectacles of Conflict* (2017); *Rethinking the Theatre of the Absurd: Ecology, the Environment and the Greening of the Modern Stage* (2015, with Carl Lavery) and *Jean Genet* (2012, with David Bradby). She is editor of *A New History of Theatre in France* (2024) and is currently writing *Spectres of Empire: Performing Postcoloniality in France* (contracted with Liverpool University Press) on theatre that addresses France's colonial past, and postcolonial present.

Jo Chard

Jo Chard is a Senior Producer and researcher at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, with over a decade of experience working across community settings, festivals, and collaborative practices. Their work centres on democratised and experimental approaches to programming and making, with a particular focus on the transformative potential of shared governance models within the cultural sector and their wider socio-political implications.

In 2023, they produced *Disrupt: Tools for Sharing Power*, a practical framework designed to support cultural organisations in democratising decision-making processes. This work informed the co-authored paper *Sharing Power: The Ethics of Decision Making and Funding* (Chard and Mackney, 2024), which explores how co-creation and durational methodologies can decentralise authority and foster more equitable collaboration.

Their PhD research investigates decision-making and power within community-led governance models in UK cultural organisations. It examines the extent to which these approaches can genuinely support democratic practice, the structural and ideological barriers they face, and the policy and legislative frameworks that shape their implementation.

Professor John Sloboda

Professor John Sloboda is an Emeritus Professor at the Guildhall School, where he was the founder of its Institute for Social Impact Research in the Performing Arts. He was Principal Investigator on the AHRC-funded project "Music for Social Impact: Practitioners' contexts, work, and beliefs" from 2020–2023, and from 2009–2019 led Guildhall School's "Understanding Audiences" research programme. He is Emeritus Professor at Keele and was a staff member of the School of Psychology at Keele from 1974–2008, where he was Director of its Unit for the Study of Musical Skill and Development, founded in 1991. John is internationally known for his work on the psychology of music. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and has been President of both the Psychology and General Sections of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, as well as President of the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music. He served a 3-year term as founding President of an international platform for research into the Social Impact of Making Music (www.simm-platform.eu). He was the recipient of the 1998 British Psychological Society's President's Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychological Knowledge, and in 2004, he was elected to Fellowship of the British Academy. In 2018, he was awarded an OBE for his services to psychology and music. His books include *Handbook of Music and Emotion* (co-edited with Patrik Juslin), and *Exploring the Musical Mind*, both published by Oxford University Press. He continues a close association with Guildhall School, where he is currently co-supervising three doctoral students.

Orla O'Loughlin

Orla is Vice-Principal & Director of Drama at Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Orla's work has won awards including The James Menzies Kitchin Directors Award, Herald Angels, Fringe Firsts, Critics Award for Theatre in Scotland, Lustrum and Stage Awards. Her recent production of *The Time Machine* at the Park Theatre, was nominated for an Olivier Award in the 'outstanding achievement in an affiliate theatre' category.

Directing includes: *Lear* (Raw Material, in association with Singapore International Festival/ National Theatre of Scotland); *V.L.* (F.M.P at The Roundabout), *James V: Katherine*, (Raw Material/ Capital Theatres Edinburgh); *Enough of Him* (National Theatre of Scotland); *How Much is your Iron?* (Young Vic); *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (West Yorkshire Playhouse/ UK Tour/ West End); *Kebab* (Dublin International Theatre Festival/ Royal Court); *For Once* (Hampstead Theatre/ UK Tour); *The Fire Raisers* (BAC); *Black Comedy*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Relatively Speaking* (Watermill Theatre); *A Respectable Widow Takes to Vulgarity and Clean* (Oran Mor/59E59, New York).

As former Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre, directing credits include *Mouthpiece*, *What Girls are Made of*, *Swallow*, *Ciara*, *Spoiling*, *Meet Me at Dawn* and *Locker Room Talk*.

Listed in *the Observer* as one of the top fifty Cultural Leaders in the UK, Orla is a Vice Principal at Guildhall where she was conferred the title Professor in recognition of her 'outstanding contribution to the advancement of her discipline'.

Trish Reid

Trish Reid is Professor in Theatre and Performance and Head of the School of Arts and Communication Design at the University of Reading, UK. She is the author of three monographs, *Theatre & Scotland* (2013), *The Theatre of Anthony Neilson* (2017), and *Theatre and Performance in Contemporary Scotland* (2024). She has published widely on contemporary British theatre and its engagement with politics in the broadest sense. With Liz Tomlin, she is editor of the Cambridge series, *Elements in Theatre, Performance and the Political*, and with Claire Cochrane, Lynette Goddard and Catherine Hindson of the two-volume *Routledge Companion to Twentieth-Century British Theatre and Performance* (2024–25). Both projects aim to challenge dominant narratives of theatre history by including diverse and previously marginalised voices. Trish is from Glasgow.

EASTAP Executive Committee

Peter M. Boenisch (President)

Peter M. Boenisch is Professor of Dramaturgy at Aarhus University. His research areas are theatre direction, dramaturgy, and the intersections of theatre and politics, as they become manifest in aspects such as spectatorship, the institutional conditions of theatre production, and transcultural performance in a globalised Europe.

Most of his research seeks close collaboration with theatre artists and institutions to undertake what he calls “practice relevant” research. Peter’s books include *Directing Scenes and Senses: The Thinking of Regie* (2015), *The Theatre of Thomas Ostermeier* (co-authored with the German director, 2016), and, as editor, the volume *Littlewood – Strehler – Planchon* in the series *The Great European Stage Directors* (with Clare Finburgh Delijani, 2018), the 30th anniversary edition of *David Bradby and David Williams’s Directors’ Theatre* (2019), and *The Schaubühne Berlin under Thomas Ostermeier: Reinventing Realism* (2020). At AU, he leads the research group “Paradigms of Dramaturgy: Arts, Institutions and the Social”. He has been one of the founding members of EASTAP. Originally from Munich/Germany, he previously worked at LMU Munich, the University of Kent, and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London.

Alix de Morant (Vice-President)

Alix de Morant is Professor in Theatre & Dance Studies at University Montpellier Paul Valéry. She is in charge of the EXERCE Master of Choreography and also directs the DAPCE Master degree in European Arts & Culture Management. She is author of numerous articles on contemporary dance and theatre performance. In addition, she is the author with Sylvie Clidière of the essay *Exterieur Danse, Montpellier, L’Entretemps* 2009 and co-edited with Eliane Beaufils *Scènes en partage, Montpellier, Deuxième époque*, 2018. She is one of the main editors of *John Cassavetes, Imaginaire des corps, entre la scène et l’écran*, Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2021, and *Narrativity and Intermediality in Contemporary Theatre*, Peter Lang, 2021.

Her interest includes site specific experiences, contemporary dance & performance, theatre & cognitive sciences and the various liminal domains where dance meets the other arts. Trained as a dancer and an actress, she is working mainly on the relation between practice and theory.

Rui Pina Coelho (Secretary)

Rui Pina Coelho (Évora, Portugal, 1975) is an Assistant Professor at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon (FLUL), Director of the Centre for Theatre Studies (FLUL) and Director of *Sinais de Cena – Performing Arts and Theatre Studies Journal*. He has coordinated the volume *Contemporary Portuguese Theatre: Experimentalism, Politics and Utopia* [working title] (TNDMII / Bicho do Mato, 2017). Since 2010, he has been collaborating regularly with TEP – Teatro Experimental do Porto as a playwright and dramaturg.

Asta Petrikienė (Treasurer)

Dr Asta Petrikienė is a research fellow at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, Department of Music and Theatre History. Her research interests include Lithuanian and European theatre history, the socioeconomical aspects of theatre making, sustainability and technologies in theatre, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the theatre industry. In 2015, Petrikienė defended her doctoral thesis on relations between theatre and the state in Interwar Lithuania. Her key publications are contributions to the collective monographs, *Reclaimed Avant-garde: Spaces and Stages of Avant-garde Theatre in Central-Eastern Europe* (2018) and *Lexicon of Avant-garde Theatre in Central-Eastern Europe* (2022).

Elected Members

Ewa Bal

Franziska Bork Petersen

Dominic Chamayou-Douglas

Timmy de Laet

Francesca di Fazio

Martina Groß

Philip Hager

Stefania Lodi Rizzini

Leonardo Mancini

Aldo Milohnić

Ina Pukelytė

Avra Sidiropoulou

Luk van den Dries

Noah Lena Vercauteren

Pieter Verstraete

Daniele Vianello

Emerging Scholars Forum Convenors

Dominic Chamayou-Douglas

Dominic Chamayou-Douglas is a playwright, translator, producer and theatre scholar. He is currently studying for a PhD Cotutelle at the Universities of Kent (UK) and Lille (Fr) on the topic of contemporary theatre translation between France and the United Kingdom. Some other areas of interest include contemporary playwrighting, the sociology of translation, cultural theory and comparative studies. He has written and spoken about the impact of AI on playwrighting at conferences in France, the UK and Japan. As a practicing playwright, his work has been performed in the UK and France in venues including the Bush theatre, Oran Mor and Les Feux de la Rampe. From 2016-19, he co-founded and produced the Paris Fringe festival, an international festival of contemporary theatre and performance, involving over fifty productions in venues across the French capital.

Noah Lena Vercauteren

Noah Lena Vercauteren (they/them) is a writer, editor, dramaturg, and PhD researcher affiliated at the University of Ghent, Belgium, and the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Their research focuses on the positions and practices of institutional dramaturgs at Flemish and Dutch city theaters. Together with Dr. Lily Climenhaga, they guest-edited the special issue “Institutional Dramaturgies” for Theater, published by Yale’s David Geffen School of Drama’s. They also work for Etcetera, a Flemish magazine for performing arts, and Kluger Hans, a Dutch-speaking literary magazine.

Conference Steering Committee

Conference Convenor

Andy Lavender

See 'Keynote Chairs' section for Andy's biography.

Steering Committee

Dan Shorten

Dan Shorten is Creative Director of Guildhall Production Studio (GPS) at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where he leads the development of award-winning audiovisual installations, XR experiences, and large-scale live events and exhibitions. His work spans video mapping, projection design, volumetric capture, and interactive technologies delivered through GPS's innovative commercial and consultancy services.

Dan is currently Co-Investigator on several funded projects:

- The AHRC Commercialisation-funded ARray project, exploring costume design through a volumetric asset library.
- The Creative Capabilities and Research Fund (CResCa), developing XR tools for performance, production, and design.
- The UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship, supporting Professor Toby Young in creating immersive opera using GPS's XR infrastructure, spatial audio, and real-time media design.

Dan's creative portfolio includes high-profile works such as *Beasts of London* (Museum of London), *Londinium* (Guildhall Yard), *Light Odyssey* (Lightpool Festival), *Orchestrave* (Barbican), and *Future and Form* (UEA/ACE). These projects exemplify his approach – merging narrative and musicality with cutting-edge technology to produce digitally augmented, emotionally resonant experiences.

His research and creative practice focus on the convergence of live performance, video art, spatial computing, and interactive systems at the intersection of art, technology, and performance.

Emily Orley

Emily Orley is a London-based artist, researcher and educator, whose work includes performance, scenography, installation, video and hybrid modes of writing. She is interested in exploring ideas to do with memory, maintenance and enchantment, as well as the un-fixing of time, heritage and place. Always open to new forms of experimentation, she is endlessly inspired by lively discussions, new encounters, and unlikely assemblages. She is a firm believer in breaking down the false binaries that separate practice and theory, making and thinking and writing about making.

As well as working on the MA at Guildhall School, Orley supervises PhD students, and runs postgraduate workshops on practice-as-research methods and creative-critical writing. She is a founding member of Guildhall's Practice-as-Research network, and a co-convenor of the London-wide Out of Practice (Oops) collective, open to all artists, academics and writers interested in creative-critical practices.

Jo Chard

See 'Keynote Chairs' section for Jo's biography.

Sean Gregory

Sean Gregory is Vice Principal and Director of Innovation & Engagement, responsible for the development and delivery of a range of collaborative, socially engaged and wider lifelong learning programmes across Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Alongside working as a composer, performer, and creative producer, he has led participatory arts projects for all ages and abilities in association with many British and international orchestras, opera companies, theatres, galleries, and arts education organisations. Sean has previously held a range of roles at the Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama, including Director of Creative Learning, Head of the Centre for Creative and Professional Practice and Head of Professional Development. He also set up and ran the Guildhall Connect programme which won the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2005 for its pioneering music leadership and creative ensemble activity with young people in East London.

Sophie Hope

Dr. Sophie Hope received her BA History of Art from University of East Anglia, MA Curating from Goldsmiths and carried out her AHRC funded doctorate at Birkbeck, University of London in cultural democracy and the commissioning of art to effect social change. Dr. Hope was an independent curator for 10 years, working locally and internationally to develop a collaborative, socially engaged curatorial practice. On completing her PhD she worked as a full-time academic, developing her practice-based research and teaching on the MA Arts Policy and Management at Birkbeck from 2010-2023. She has been in post as the Lecturer in Socially Engaged Practices at Guildhall School of Music & Drama since 2024 where she is co-developing the Guildhall De-Centre for Socially Engaged Practice and Research.

Dr. Hope's research interests are in socially engaged arts practices, evaluation, cultural policy and practice-based and participatory research methods. Her practice-based research is often developed with others through the format of devised workshops, using role play, games, storytelling, collage and movement to exploring subjects such as art and politics, physical and emotional experiences of work, stories of socially engaged art and the ethics of employability in the creative industries. She is interested in how artists use their practices to engage in dialogue, making and exchange with others.

Simon Bayly

Simon is currently co-leader of the postgraduate research programme at Guildhall School Music & Drama.

He works broadly in the fields of live art and performance and is open to supervising MPhil/PhD projects in the following areas: participatory and socially-engaged forms of art practice; performance and live art; art and ecology; the meanings of work and labour within artistic milieux; the material and social architectures of performance and place-making; philosophies of performance; the psychodynamics of groups and organizations; intersections of performance and psychoanalysis.

He started his professional career as Associate Director responsible for international development at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, directed the London-based live arts company PUR, active between 1992 and 2008 and has a long-standing interest in the psychodynamics of groups, studying for postgraduate qualifications in psychoanalytic approaches to organization at the Tavistock & Portman NHS Trust and the Institute of Group Analysis.

Special thanks to

Dylan Bate, Technical Production Manager

Eliza Robey, Event Manager

Iona McTaggart, Innovation Producer

Melissa Bonnelame, Office Manager & Executive Assistant

Rupert Avis, Research Support Officer

**Victoria Karlsson, Research & Innovation
Office Administrator**