

## 7th International Symposium of the journal *Estudis Escènics* 2025

# Society Makes the Show

### Performing arts, communities, and cultural rights

in collaboration with IT Acció Social and the postgraduate programme in Performing Arts and Social Action

Institut del Teatre, Barcelona, 8-9 October 2025

The concept of *social action* seems, to the eyes of the artistic community, as attractive as it is problematic: what exactly does *social action* mean? Can we really talk about *social action* within an artistic context? Would it not be more accurate to talk about *social transformation*, or practices of inclusion, diversity, and accessibility with a cultural rights perspective? *Social action*, in being *action*, involves a series of practices that precisely question our way of living daily life; practices that require dedication and commitment, that operate forcefully, that have a visible and tangible impact on human lives. Could we say the same about the performing arts? While it is true that any artistic form that is publicly displayed and, therefore, generates a dialogue with the audience and society is, in itself, political, how do we verify its effective impact on the social sector and how do we assess its ethical stance?

With awareness of the importance of words and the fluidity of language, when addressing such complex issues, we cannot fail to also be critical of the terminology we use and with which we often defend ourselves. If we use the concept of social action to connote a cross-cutting area and a postgraduate programme at the Institut del Teatre, we must assume how problematic this definition can be.

In this symposium, we want to ask ourselves how we legitimise the use of the performing arts in certain community dynamics that aim at inclusion. On the one hand, we intuit that the performing arts can be a powerful tool for working in non-artistic contexts; on the other, it is necessary to highlight the benefits of this intersection: social commitment affects artistic practice and allows it to open other perspectives, new points of view, initiate generational change... And, above all, it forces art – and the performing arts, in our case – to keep in mind what the objectives are. Once again, the symposium

proposes to open a community space for reflection and dialogue, with the aim of tracing theoretical lines and imagining possible future horizons, this time based on four thematic lines that dialogue with and question each other: cultural rights and accessibility; community action and mediation in higher artistic education; applied performing arts; and aesthetic contributions of community practices.

## **Thematic lines**

### **Cultural Rights and Accessibility**

According to the latest cultural consumption survey by family income, compiled by the Observatori dels Públics del Patrimoni Cultural de Catalunya, only 9.6% of Catalans in the lowest income bracket can enjoy culture and access cultural activities. The new draft law to guarantee cultural rights being prepared by the Generalitat de Catalunya reads: “Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes the first universal guarantee of cultural rights. To guarantee this right, the Cultural System of Catalonia (...) must promote the diversity of cultural expressions present in Catalonia (...).” So, what exactly are cultural rights? When and why are they drafted? How do they work? How do they affect and shape present and future cultural identities, both individual and collective? How do they affect us as artists, teachers, researchers, as project leaders, as an institution dedicated to the performing arts? Moreover, how do cultural rights interact with the implementation of accessibility plans promoted by different administrations? How are sufficient accessibility conditions guaranteed in communication, so that, progressively, people with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities can enjoy, understand, and participate in the arts and culture?

### **Community Action and Mediation in Higher Artistic Education**

The design of a mapping that reflects the situation of artistic mediation training in undergraduate and postgraduate studies must allow singularities and the common denominator to be identified. Visualising community action as a cross-cutting line in higher artistic education implies the implementation of new teaching methodologies, such as service-learning; as well as new curricular contents. In this way, we can broaden the perspective on different professional profiles and understand that both social and community action, as well as artistic mediation, are not only a response to a social need,

but also an opportunity for job placement. However, a multidisciplinary perspective is necessary to train artists-educators with skills in the various fields and knowledge that these artistic community practices demand.

### **Applied Performing Arts**

The concept of *applied performing arts* defines diverse performing practices that are used in non-artistic contexts (prisons, hospitals, arts centres, socio-cultural centres, schools, etc.) with a primarily social, educational, therapeutic, integrative and transformative purpose. These are projects that do not materialise in the field of art but that use performing arts tools and procedures to promote and facilitate processes of wellbeing, care, and improvement of quality of life. Thus, the value of the performing arts is legitimised in relation to different contexts, and artistic knowledge is valued in relation to the social, educational and community field.

### **Aesthetic Contributions of Community Practices**

Artistic practices located in community contexts, or that involve a social dimension, often make use of biographical material of an anecdotal nature, life stories, documents linked to different archives, family albums, and other tools typical of documentary theatre. However, their staging is not necessarily realistic, and it is worth observing the aesthetic experiments that these practices have brought to the stage, and how they have altered key concepts such as beauty, canon, or success. Likewise, we are interested in reflecting on the dynamics generated when the artist and/or producer activates community or collaborative processes in different artistic environments. It is noted, in fact, that community artistic practices positively affect professional artistic creation contexts, making them more porous, diverse and inclusive, generating new grammars, new scenes, and new narratives.

The 7th International Symposium of the journal *Estudis Escènics*, which will take place at the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona on 8-9 October 2025, opens its call for papers.

Communication proposals (about 15'-20') can address any of the four lines of debate of the symposium and can be submitted in text form (in Catalan, Spanish, or English) until

15 May 2025 through the following online form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/uE7xShM3Nt>

Selected proposals will be presented in the form of a paper or communication during the symposium and will be published in issue 51 of *Estudis Escènics* (2026). There is also the possibility that some will be selected only for publication.

Every applicant selected must hand in their article before the date of the symposium, following the instructions that will be sent to them once they have been selected. Due to the journal being indexed, the articles will be peer reviewed. Articles in Spanish and Catalan will be translated into English, and English originals will be translated into Catalan. The symposium will have simultaneous translation in Catalan sign language. Every applicant will receive a response.