

The Prism of Festivals in Theatre and Performance Studies

Open Historiographic Issues

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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between Local and Global

Rethinking Theatre and Performance in Italy from the 1950s to the 1970s

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Speakers/authors and their abstracts are presented in alphabetical order.

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Martí Alós López

Universitat de Barcelona

Phd student in the doctorate program Cultura: Història, Antropologia, Art i Patrimoni from the Universitat de Barcelona. He holds a degree in History and a masters in Contemporary History at the same university, both with an extraordinary mention. He was awarded with the Teresa Cunillé Award on research about the contemporary history of Catalan theatre, organized by the Intsitut del Teatre and the Romea Theatre. In 2024, he inaugurated, as curator, the exhibition *A Theatrical Explosion in Times of Change: The Grec-76 Festival and the AAD (Assembly of Actors and Directors)* at the Museu de les Arts Escèniques in Barcelona and published the book *El Grec-76 i l'Assemblea d'Actors i Directors: un element de ruptura en l'escena teatral de la transició barcelonina* (2025).

Poster Session I

Grec-76, a Commitment to the Self-Management of Festivals and the Challenges of its Study

In 1976, within the context of the transition from a dictatorial regime to a democracy, an intense and politically charged theatre movement emerged in the city of Barcelona. Its main goal was to democratize the theatrical sector of the cultural capital of the Spanish state. To demonstrate the organizational capacity of a theatre community unified under a single assembly, the decision was made to organize the first summer theatre festival at the Teatre Grec in Barcelona. This phenomenon was grounded in the principles of self-management and horizontal decision-making, with the aim of creating a democratic form of theatre that would also function as a public service, under the motto: “Per un teatre al servei del poble” (For a theatre at the service of the people).

This poster aims not only to offer some insights into the key features of this extraordinary initiative, but more importantly, to highlight the challenges and benefits of analyzing such a unique and atypical phenomenon – at least within the Catalan cultural landscape. Although the research is rooted in historical methodology, it has necessarily developed through a combination of archival work, newspaper documentation, and, above all, the invaluable contribution of oral sources. The objective, therefore, is to explore how this experience – one that included the participation of groups well-known in Italy, such as Comedianti (with a long history of performing at Italian festivals) – may contribute to the understanding and study of Italian theatre festivals. At the same time, reflecting on the role of this festival within the broader context of Spain's political transition offers a unique opportunity to recognize the value of theatre as an agent of change and the potential of festivals to connect theatre with the political, social, and cultural life of communities.

Clarisse Bardiot

Université de Rennes 2

Principal Investigator of the STAGE project, she is Professor of History of Contemporary Theatre and Digital Humanities at Rennes 2 University. Her research focuses on

performing arts digital traces, creative processes analysis, the history and aesthetics of digital performance, the preservation of digital works, and experimental publishing. She is the author of *Performing Arts and Digital Humanities. From Traces to Data* (Wiley/Iste, 2021).

Panel III

From Program to Data: Macro and Micro Perspectives at the Avignon Festivals (In and Off)

in collaboration with **Antonios Lagarias** and **Jeanne Fras**

Writing the history of theatre festivals ([Fléchet et al. 2013](#); [Knowles 2020](#)) in the digital age requires articulating micro-historical reconstructions with macro-historical patterns within a coherent historiographic framework. Taking the Avignon Festivals (In and Off) as a case study, comprising more than 30,000 productions since 1947, we employ literal transcription and data modelling to transform show programmes into structured data, covering the history of both festivals. By combining diplomatic fidelity to the source with ontological structuring and computational analysis, it is then possible to connect individual trajectories, e.g. the career of an artist, with collective dynamics, e.g. changes within a group, a festival or broader theatre practices.

One of the main documentary traces to study the history of theatre festivals, which have long been overlooked, are the show programmes of each performance. Distributed at the entrance of a theatre and often discarded after the performance, programmes are ephemeral prints whose initial function is to provide practical information to the audience. Once the performance is over, however, they become material evidence that a collective event did take place, bringing together artists, technicians, institutions, and audiences at a specific time and place. As such, programmes are not merely auxiliary documents; they are primary sources that testify to the collaborative, institutional, and aesthetic dimensions of theatre production ([Berbain and Obligi 2014](#)).

For theatre historians, programmes are crucial sources. On the one hand, they are part of visual culture, with their own design choices, typographic conventions, and aesthetic strategies. On the other hand, they list the people, professions, institutions, and sometimes sponsors that shaped each performance. They capture networks of collaboration, economic realities, and changing theatrical practices. In this sense, they offer both descriptive data and analytical potential, providing direct access to the event without mediation by critics or the press.

Already in the 1970s, some of the first digital humanities projects in theatre studies were based on events and programme collections ([Bardiot 2021](#)). The *London Stage Information Bank* (1970–1978) is often considered a pioneering initiative, gathering calendars of London theatrical performances from 1660 to 1800. Its creator, Ben Ross Schneider, envisioned precisely the kind of research avenues that computational methods would later enable: trends across seasons, typical career patterns, the dynamics of repertory systems ([Burkert 2017](#)). More recently, projects such as Derek Miller's *Visualizing Broadway* have shown how database-driven approaches can shed light not only on canonical directors and actors but also on overlooked figures such as set designers, stage managers, and other professionals essential to the production process ([Miller 2016](#)).

Yet the apparent simplicity of programmes is deceptive. Turning them into structured data requires methodological and epistemological choices. As Johanna Drucker has argued, transcription is always an act of “captation,” never neutral but interpretive (Drucker 2011). One must establish categories, fields, and relations, thereby interpreting the source. This process immediately raises questions: how should one normalize or preserve terminological variation? What about more specific mentions, such as “horse trainers”, “wig designers”, or specialists for stage combat, that might disappear in the homogenization of metadata?

The programme for Patrice Chéreau’s *Hamlet* at the 1988 Festival d’Avignon exemplifies these issues. Compared with its digital catalogue record (“notice de spectacle”) in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the discrepancies are striking: job titles altered, functions reinterpreted, contributors omitted altogether. The disappearance of Mario Luraschi, a renowned equestrian consultant, illustrates the loss of entire networks of relationships when transcription is not literal. Only a diplomatic transcription can preserve the richness of such material, enabling research on the evolution of professions, the recognition of technical expertise, and the concrete diversity of collaborators.

Two methodological imperatives follow. First, literal transcription of programmes must be preserved, as it safeguards the nuances and granularity of the original sources. Second, a data model must be developed to capture the complexity of the performing arts. Standard databases (Roussillon and Schuway 2020; van Oort and Noordegraaf 2020; Douguet 2024), with their rigid schemas, are poorly adapted to the evolving, heterogeneous nature of theatrical information. Ontologies, by contrast, can represent conceptual relations, integrate semantic change, and generate new knowledge by making implicit information explicit.

Within the ERC-funded *From Stage to Data* project, we have adopted the Linked Art model¹, based on CIDOC-CRM (Doerr 2003), as a foundation, extending it specifically for the performing arts. We distinguish three hierarchical levels: *Work* (the abstract identity, e.g. *Hamlet* as a play conceived by a director or group and inspired by Shakespeare’s original work), *Production* (a concrete staging or series of performances, e.g. Chéreau’s version for the Festival d’Avignon), and *Performance* (the most granular level, a single event on a specific date with its unique conditions). This structure ensures both interoperability with cultural heritage ontologies and the ability to represent the distinctive features of each theatrical event.

Implementing this model requires a carefully designed workflow. The first step is the transcription of programmes into text. For this task, large language models (LLMs) outperform traditional OCR when used with carefully engineered prompts (Kim et al. 2025). The second step is the extraction of entities and relationships, which are then converted into RDF triples according to the ontology. RDF enables the encoding of each assertion as a machine-readable statement, which can then be reconciled with external authority files such as VIAF, ISNI, or the BnF’s roles vocabulary. Authority control is critical for ensuring interoperability: the same individual, institution, or profession must be consistently identified across multiple sources and datasets. Aligning extracted data with international authority records not only prevents duplication but also makes possible large-scale comparative research across institutions and collections.

¹ <https://linked.art/>

All stages of this process are integrated into Arvest², a web app developed within the project ([Bardiot et al. 2024](#)). Based on IIIF and a Mirador fork, Arvest allows researchers to navigate seamlessly between the original source (PDF programme), its diplomatic transcription, its structured data, and network visualizations. This integration makes it possible to combine close reading (attention to the textual and material details of a programme) with distant reading (analysis of large-scale networks and trends).

Methodologically, this approach opens a double historiographical perspective. On the macro-historical level, data extracted from the programmes enable quantitative analyses: network analysis of collaborations, time-series analysis of professions and job titles, longitudinal study of genres and practices. The Avignon Festival, with thousands of productions since 1947, provides an ideal laboratory for studying long-term shifts in European theatre networks. On the micro-historical level, the same data allow reconstruction of individual careers. Scenographers, technicians, or performers can be followed across decades, their collaborations compared, their trajectories reconstructed. Much like catalogues raisonnés in the visual arts, aggregated programmes could form the basis of systematic histories of theatre practitioners.

These two scales are not opposed but complementary. Macro-historical analyses situate individual careers within broader patterns, while micro-historical reconstructions give substance and context to abstract trends. This dual perspective exemplifies how digital humanities tools can enrich and transform theatre historiography.

Silvia Bottirolì – Keynote Speaker

PhD, lives in Bologna, Italy, and works trans-locally as a curator, writer and researcher in the expanded field of the live arts and in particular at the intersections between performativity, institutional practices and pedagogies.

She was the artistic director of DAS Theatre in Amsterdam (2018-2021) and of Santarcangelo Festival (2012-2016). She curated *FUORI!* for Emilia Romagna Teatro in Bologna (2022-2023), *For the Time Being* for Freespace in Hong Kong (2020-2021), *The May Events* for KunstenFestivalDesArts in Brussels and *Vooruit* in Ghent (2018), *Shipbuilding and other joint efforts* for Homo Novus Festival in Riga (2015).

Silvia teaches Methodology, Critique, and Research in the Arts at Bocconi University in Milan, lectures and examines at institutions across Europe and works collaboratively in curatorial and editorial projects. Her writings have been published in a number of international magazines and publications, and her latest book is *What Can Theatre Do*, co-edited with Miguel A. Melgares and published by BRUNO in 2024.

Silvia is a member of the inaugural [Rose Choreographic School](#) at Sadler's Wells in London (2025-2026), and the artistic co-director of [Short Theater Festival](#) in Rome (2025-2027).

La questione della primavera. I festival tra presente e futuro

² <https://arvest.app/fr>

Johanna Carvajal González

Aix-Marseille Université, Universidad de Antioquia, Université de Polynésie Française

Research assistant at the University of French Polynesia, she holds a PhD in Hispanic and Latin American Studies and Arts at Aix-Marseille University (France), in joint supervision with the Faculty of Arts at the University of Antioquia (Colombia). Her research focuses on the representations of war witnesses in Street art and theatre in Colombia, specially in contexts of urban extreme violence and theatrical experiences with ex members of the FARC guerrilla. She holds a Master's degree in Performance Studies from the University of Bologna and a Master's in Cultural and Humanitarian Project Management from Aix-Marseille University. She is interested in artistic forms that question memory, promote activism, and create new imaginaries through art in peripheral contexts, conflict zones, and socio-political tension.

Poster Session I

Festival Selva Adentro: Art and Pedagogy for Peace in Colombia

Following the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement between the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army) guerrilla — the oldest guerrilla group in Latin America — and the government of President Juan Manuel Santos, a political, social, and cultural process began to facilitate the reintegration of the peace agreement signatories into civilian life. This transition has been supported and accompanied by cultural and artistic initiatives, including participatory works, relational art, and festivals.

This PhD research aims to answer the following questions: How can art serve as a repository for the memory of the victims of the Colombian armed conflict? Can engagement with art contribute to the development of resilience among victims? Is there an ethical framework for artistic work with victims that prevents re-victimization? Hence, this study closely examines the war narratives of peace signatories, who were part of the former Front 57 of the FARC-EP, as well as the civilian community that experiences the consequences of the conflict.

This research focuses on the Selva Adentro Festival, held in the location that served as the disarmament camp for the FARC-EP guerrilla in 2016, in the department of Chocó on Colombia's Pacific coast. The festival was born from the theatrical experiences that the guerrilla members had during their armed lives. In this place, a theater was built with the help of the signatories, and each year, a performing arts festival is held there, equipped with pedagogical tools aimed at fostering civic engagement and supporting the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life.

The festival's strengths and limitations were analyzed, offering a cross-disciplinary perspective that brings together sociology, anthropology, and the arts in an attempt to assess its impact on the local population. The objective was to study the different conditions in which these populations experienced the conflict and its consequences, through accounts collected via on-site interviews. These interviews helped to analyze the impact of the artistic work presented at the festival and the participants' engagement in the event each year.

Furthermore, this research highlights how art creates a space for the construction of memory – not only historical memory – of the Colombian conflict, emphasising the plurality of existing narratives. At the heart of this study is an analysis of the potential

resilience process facilitated by art, through the tools it provides for generating peaceful alternatives to violence, as well as fostering political and emotional communities.

Finally, particular emphasis was placed on the nature of these narratives, which exist thanks to a space of intimacy constructed between the artist and those who were affected in one way or another by the conflict from different sides, crystallizing in local experiences. War narratives do not constitute a mere chronology of events but rather a storytelling process—that is, a subjective organization of experience through which the individual gives meaning to their journey. For all these reasons, in this research several conclusions were drawn directly from these narratives, highlighting the voices of the social groups studied.

Elena Cervellati

University of Bologna

Associate Professor, she teaches Dance History and Dance Theories at the University of Bologna. There, she coordinates the research group [*Theories and Practices of Italian Dance*](#), oversees the European branch of the Kazuo Ohno Archive, and – together with Elena Randi – serves as editor-in-chief of the journal [*Danza e ricerca. Laboratorio di studi, scritture, visioni*](#), founded by Eugenia Casini Ropa. Her research addresses ballet in the first half of the nineteenth century, forms of Italian contemporary dance from the 1970s onwards, the relationship between language and the dancing body, and videodance. Her publications include *Théophile Gautier e la danza. La rivelazione del corpo nel balletto del XIX secolo* (2007), *Storia della danza* (2020), *Marie Taglioni e Giselle in Italia. Migrazioni e traduzioni del balletto romantico nell'Ottocento* (2024), and, co-edited with Silvia Garzarella, *Danza, schermi e visori. Contaminazioni digitali nella scena italiana* (2024). Between 1997 and 2002, she held the position of organizer for the Compagnia Abbondanza/Bertoni, and since 2008 she has been responsible for curating dance initiatives within the programme of Centro La Soffitta.

Panel II

Hybrid spectatorship. Video dance festivals in Italy between screens, viewers, and the desire for presence

Since the early 1980s, the Italian art scene has witnessed the emergence and gradual establishment of a new audiovisual genre: screendance. Born from the encounter between the moving body and image technologies, this field has developed in an international context that has long been attentive to the potential of the fusion between dance and video (see, for example, in a bibliography that is now particularly extensive, D. Rosenberg (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016), finding fertile ground in Italy, where there are many artistic and production companies particularly interested in this area (cfr. E. Cervellati and S. Garzarella (ed.), *Danza, schermi e visori. Contaminazioni coreografiche nella scena italiana*, Dino Audino, Roma 2024).

The presentation *Hybrid Spectatorship: Videodance Festivals in Italy between Screens, Viewers, and the Desire for Presence* aims to consider some of the main Italian

festivals dedicated to videodance, paying particular attention to the transformation of formats and the new forms of spectatorship they promote. In particular, it will focus on Riccione TTV, Il Coreografo Elettronico (Naples), Danza&Video (Milan), Digitalive (Romaeuropa Festival), and ZED Festival (Bologna), as paradigmatic examples of how venues designed to host video dance and its expansions have been able to combine artistic research, technological innovation, curatorial perspectives, and a redefinition of the role of the spectator.

Starting in the 1980s, a series of festivals emerged in Italy that played a fundamental role in legitimizing and spreading this language. Among the first and most significant was Riccione TTV (Teatro Televisione Video), founded in 1985. Conceived as a review dedicated to the audiovisual documentation of live performance, the festival is a space for viewing and reflection, in which video dance is not only an object of enjoyment, but also an opportunity to question the aesthetic and cultural transformations taking place in the performing arts system.

Starting in 1990, the city of Naples also became a reference point for Italian and international screendance thanks to the birth of the Il Coreografo Elettronico festival, an initiative promoted by the local association Napolidanza, directed by Marilena Riccio. The festival stands out for the competition it organizes, in which numerous groups from all over Europe and beyond participate, giving rise, among other things, to a rich specialized video library. In 1993, Milan joined this process of promoting video dance with the birth of the Danza & Video festival, an event created by Enrico Coffetti and directed by Paola Calvetti, which introduced a reflection on the relationship between the body, urban space, and media devices. This initiative, along with subsequent editions, prompted Coffetti to establish the Cro.Me. (Cronaca e Memoria dello spettacolo) archive, which describes itself as a “video archive in motion.”

Starting in the 2000s, the spread of digital technologies and the growing hybridization of artistic languages produced a significant change in festival formats and in the ways in which works were enjoyed. This was the backdrop for the Romaeuropa Festival, a large multidisciplinary event dedicated to contemporary arts, which in 2010 inaugurated a new section dedicated to the exploration of digital aesthetics: Digitalive. Digitalive is a platform where performance practices intertwine with emerging technologies (artificial intelligence, augmented reality, human-machine interaction), generating immersive environments in which the boundary between spectator and performer becomes increasingly blurred. In this context, video dance is no longer conceived exclusively as an object to be observed, but as an experience to be lived. The audience is therefore increasingly called upon to exercise active spectatorship, participating in the construction of the work in a sensory, cognitive, and emotional way. In line with these transformations, the ZED Festival was launched in Bologna in 2019, with the aim of exploring the possibilities offered by the contamination between body, screen, and interactive digital devices. The festival consists of a series of events ranging from the screening of audiovisual works to the presentation of interactive installations, virtual reality experiences, creative workshops, and moments of theoretical reflection. The chosen approach is to overcome the dichotomy between passive viewing and active participation, offering an immersive and situated spectatorship in which the audience is placed in a position not only to enjoy, but also to act within the performative devices.

The field opened up by video dance thus becomes a privileged terrain for investigating modes of artistic enjoyment in the digital age, tending to focus no longer on

the work itself, but on the relational experience it is capable of generating. This type of approach reflects a broader transformation of the very concept of the work of art, which, from a completed and autonomous object, increasingly tends to take the form of a relational, open, and evolving device, capable of activating participatory processes and redefining the traditional roles of the stage and vision.

The video dance festivals that have been active in Italy since the 1980s testify not only to the vitality of an artistic language that is still expanding, but also to the cultural system's ability to become a laboratory for experimenting with innovative formats of enjoyment and participation. The cases analyzed – from Riccione TTV to Il Coreografo Elettronico, from Danza&Video to Digitalive and ZED Festival – show how video dance has progressively abandoned its initial documentary function to become an aesthetic and political device capable of redefining the relationships between body, technology, and spectator.

In particular, the festivals that host it put into practice participatory and interactive models that emphasize the co-construction of meaning and shared experience. In an era marked by the increasing mediatization of experience, video dance festivals, which are increasingly attentive to the spaces opened up by AI, are therefore privileged places for investigating the transformations of perception, identity, and the relationship between body, image, and technology, which clearly plays a radical role not only within those special and protected containers that are obviously festivals, but also outside, in the world.

Dwaipayan Chowdhury

Freie Universität Berlin

Dwaipayan Chowdhury was awarded his PhD from the “International Research Center – Interweaving Performance Cultures” at Freie Universität, Berlin (2023). He has been a student of communication studies, literature studies and theater and performance studies. He has studied in Berlin, Amsterdam, New Delhi and Kolkata. His writings have been published in The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Stage Directors (forthcoming), The Brecht Yearbook / Das Brecht-Jahrbuch, Asian Theatre Journal, Lateral Journal and Rupkatha Journal. He has been a recipient of numerous student research awards (which include awards from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and the University of Warwick, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Amsterdam, Freie Universität Berlin, Gesellschaft für Sinn und Form, Association for Asian Performance, International Federation for Theatre Research). Dwaipayan has contributed to as a speaker in many international conferences and workshops across a number of countries and universities. Presently Dwaipayan is editing and re-drafting his PhD dissertation into a book manuscript for a reputed publisher in the field of Brecht studies. He has also worked as a teaching assistant faculty at the department of Theater and Performance studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Presently his research focuses at the intersections between performance philosophy and de/anti-colonial theory.

Poster Session I

Nandikar's “National Theatre Festival”: The Changing Trajectories of an Uthsob

Valentina Compagnucci

Sapienza University of Rome

Born in 1997, she is currently pursuing an MA in Writing and Production for the Performing Arts and Media at Sapienza University of Rome, where she is preparing a thesis in Theatre Studies, Performance & Environmental Humanities. With a research fellowship funded by the Marche Region, she contributes to *Methods and Practices of Artistic Care for the Territory*, a project dedicated to reinterpreting specific contexts through curatorial strategies and cultural activation. She is co-founder and co-artistic director (2019–2024) of the festival *I Fumi della Fornace* and currently chairs Congerie APS, an association engaged in imaginative practices for the re-semantization of territories.

Poster Session II

Inteatro in Polverigi: a Festival-Laboratory between Local Territory and New Theatrical Perspectives

Inteatro Festival was founded in 1977 in Polverigi, a small rural town situated in the central Italian region called Marche, often regarded as peripheral to major urban centres. The festival evolved during its first decade into a “festival-laboratory” dedicated to reinhabiting and reimagining public space through contemporary performance. By renewing theatrical practices at both regional and national levels, Inteatro became a platform where local context and international experimentation intersected.

This study adopts a critical-historiographical approach and mobilises cross-referenced sources: archival and administrative records, press reviews, Inteatro-produced materials, oral accounts from organisers, artists, and residents, as well as audiovisual traces (photography, video, and other ephemera) that capture the visual and performative dimensions of the events that took place there.

The analysis highlights the transformation of public spaces into arenas of artistic experimentation and collective participation; the collaborative interplay between local authorities and artists; and the attention directed towards both resident and external audiences. It also identifies the early emergence of national and international networks within the genealogies of the festival’s productions.

Through these dynamics, Inteatro emerges as an exemplary case in the Italian theatrical landscape – one that challenges the centre/periphery divide and initiates processes of redefining shared spaces. The heterogeneity of sources and the historiographical perspective adopted – situating these practices within broader socio-cultural transformations – suggest that such a festival device can recalibrate relations between territory, community, and artistic experimentation, while opening pathways for further diachronic investigation.

Marco Consolini

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

Professor of Theatre History at the Institut d'Etudes Théâtrales of the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, where he founded the Groupe de Recherche Interuniversitaire sur les Revues

de Théâtre (GRIRT) in 2011 with Sophe Lucet and Romain Piana, and where he directs the Licence Professionnelle “Encadrement d'Ateliers de Pratique Théâtrale”.

His publications include: « *Théâtre Populaire* » (1953-1964). *Storia di una rivista militante*, Rome, Bulzoni, 2002 (Paris, IMEC Éditions, 1998); *Rivolte, utopie e tradizione nel teatro francese* (Revolts, utopias and tradition in French theatre), in *Storia del teatro moderno e contemporaneo*, III (edited by R. Alonge and G. Davico Bonino), Turin, Einaudi, 2001. He also edited: Roland Barthes, *Sul Teatro*, Rome, Meltemi, 2002 and, with Maria Ines Aliverti: Jacques Copeau, *Registres VII (Les Années Copiaus. 1925-1929)* and *VIII (Les dernières batailles. 1929-1949)*, Paris, Gallimard, 2017-2019. Has recently published: M.I. Biggi, M. Consolini, S. Lucet, R. Piana, A. Rykner, M. Zannoni, *Il teatro delle Riviste/Le Théâtre des revues. 1880-2000. I periodici come oggetti e strumenti della storiografia teatrale /Les Périodiques comme objets et outils de l'historiographie théâtrale*, Bari, Pagina, 2024.

Panel I

Avignon, Paris, Nancy: Festival, Showcase or Kermesse? A Reflection on Different Models of Festival Communities

The Avignon Festival, which began in 1947, the Nancy Festival, which began in 1963, and the more institutional Théâtre des Nations in Paris (inaugurated in 1954 as the *Festival International d'art dramatique de Paris*) have all left their mark on the history of French theatre in the second half of the 20th century: it was here that Vilar's sober and monumental aesthetic was born, which then moved to the Théâtre National Populaire at the Palais de Chaillot and became a pilot example of “*théâtre-service public*”; it was here that the theatrical model of the Berliner Ensemble was discovered, the subject of much controversy and some “Brechtian” dogmatism, destined to mobilise several generations of artists; the iconoclastic bombs of new theatre makers from afar exploded there: Grotowski and Bread and Puppet, Bob Wilson and Tadeusz Kantor, etc. This history of festivals (focusing on more or less memorable performances) has already been told, at least in part, but who witnessed these unforgettable moments (as well as the boring and disappointing ones)? Who organised them? Who actively participated, as spectators, yes, but also as members of that dense network of “festival-goers” present on site before and after the show? Who was involved in various ways in the space-time interval of the festival?

The spectators, by definition, elude us... unless we embark on laborious and insignificant attendance statistics. What does not elude us, however, are the associations that brought together certain categories (especially young people), the exchange mechanisms, the organisational methods and the many activities parallel to the programme of shows. The presence of CEMEA (*Centres d'Entrainement aux Méthodes d'Education Active*), an *éducation populaire* organisation that has been holding its courses there since 1955, and that of *Rencontres d'Avignon*, which from 1964 to 1970 involved university students, experts, youth associations and administrators, shows how much the Avignon festival, before becoming the current institutional and commercial showcase for French theatre, was a place of experimentation and critical questioning of the utopia of popular theatre. The CUIFERD (Centre Universitaire International de Formation et de Recherche Dramatique), active in Nancy since 1965, was conceived, alongside the festival, as a place for the training of “cultural animators and disseminators”

and was aimed at French and foreign students and scholarship holders: it was a laboratory for reflection and research on avant-garde theatre, but also a meeting place for an entire generation, both international and local, given the dozens of volunteers, mostly students from the University of Nancy, on whom the entire logistics of the festival depended. In Paris, in the early years of the prestigious international festival, the performances were preceded by the national anthem of the country represented and the Marseillaise: true instruments of cultural diplomacy, occasions for elegant gala evenings.

But even the Théâtre des Nations, perhaps because it was being overtaken by Nancy, gradually lost its official patina, and not only because the Living Theatre (1961) arrived in France from the United States, Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop (1963) from Great Britain, and Grotowski's The Constant Prince (1967) from Poland. Once again, on the fringes of the festival, an activity of exchange, study and research developed: the *Université Internationale du Théâtre des Nations*, with hundreds of young people participating in historical and theoretical training courses and practical workshops.

It is in this perspective that our intervention seeks to examine the famous French festivals, in the certainty that the transalpine context is a source of interesting ideas for questioning the existence of various models of festival communities, since these – intertwined with the moments of theatrical magic we have witnessed – constitute the utopian heart of the shared theatrical experience of festivals.

Borbála Csete

Pécs University

Dedicated educator and cultural expert specializing in Hungarian and French theatre, literature and languages. She earned her degree at Kossuth Lajos University in Debrecen, followed by a DEA in European Studies at Paris 8 University. With a rich academic background, she has taught Corporate Social Responsibility at Milton Friedman University in Budapest and served as a guest lecturer at Universitas Indonesia and President University in Jakarta. Currently, she is pursuing a doctoral thesis at Pécs University, focusing on theater festivals. In addition to her academic work, Borbála is a seasoned Communication and Cultural Advisor for UN Agencies. In her current role, she is leading efforts to engage target audiences for the new exhibition space at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, showcasing her expertise in fostering meaningful cultural dialogue and participation.

Poster Session I

Contemporary French Festivals and Reflections: Comparing Festival d'Avignon, the Hungarian Ördökatlan, and Participatory Models

Lorenzo Donati

University of Bologna

He is currently a research fellow at the University of Bologna's Department of Arts, where he teaches Performing Arts in the intersection between art and care in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Professional Education (School of Medicine and Surgery, Department of Biomedical and Neuromotor Sciences), Theatre Directing Workshop at DAMS, and New Approaches to the Promotion and Training of the Performing Arts in the Master's Program in Performing Arts Entrepreneurship.

His research explores the mechanisms of "writing with reality" interwoven with the poetics of contemporary theatre, the relationship between theatre and care, and contemporary Argentine theatre. He is currently investigating emerging forms of participation and audience engagement (Department of Arts, under the supervision of Matteo Casari). Among his recent publications: *Scrivere con la realtà. Oggetti teatrali non identificati 2000–19* (Cue Press, 2023) and, as co-editor with F. Biondi, *Incontro al futuro. I teatri delle residenze in Italia: un'inchiesta* (L'arboreto Edizioni, 2023). As a cultural project designer, he co-founded [Altre Velocità](#) and, since 2020, has co-directed [La Falena](#), the Teatro Metastasio's journal in Prato. He is also a member of the Scientific Committee of the Ubu Awards.

Poster Session II

Relational Turn and Dimensions of Narrative: Notes from Festivals in the Post-Pandemic Period

The post-pandemic period offers a critical lens through which to examine the evolution of theatre festivals as they confronted abrupt and pressing dynamics of reality, while at the same time probing emergent horizons of experimentation. Between 2021 and 2022, cultural discourse emphasized the role of festivals as crucial sites with an "aura" ([Boni, 2021](#)) for restoring social relationality, capable of processing, narrating, and reassembling the fragmented experiences of the present. For many audiences, theatre festivals constituted spaces of storytelling embedded in the social sphere, where being "in presence" meant engaging through listening, watching, meeting, and conversing. To sustain this function under the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, artists and organizers undertook diverse forms of adaptation: programming adjustments such as open-air or itinerant performances ([Unibo, 2024](#)), reduced or exclusively national line-ups, as well as explorations of new theatrical languages ([Donati, 2022](#)). These ranged from appropriations of stand-up comedy formats to a renewed investment in the expressive potential of audio. Constraints, although externally imposed, thus became generative of renewed dialogue with contemporaneity and its urgencies.

Several years later, this poster presentation revisits such innovations by adopting an interdisciplinary historiographic approach, starting from Italian studies on narration and the "reality trend" ([Guccini, 2011](#)). It draws on frameworks from the Medical Humanities and Trauma Studies ([Calabrese et al., 2022](#); [Demetrio, 2006](#); [van der Kolk, 2015](#)), sociological inquiries into Cultural Welfare and Audience Studies ([Manzoli, Paltrinieri, 2021](#); [Da Milano & Gariboldi, 2019](#)), while also mobilizing comparative methodologies from the fields of cultural management and the economics of performance ([Cicerchia, 2021](#)). Alongside these disciplinary crossings, the study integrates oral testimonies as a

resource to reconstruct the lived experiences of practitioners and audiences. The inquiry suggests that, after an initial period of reactive adaptation, artists and cultural organizations have developed renewed awareness that has redefined strategies of curatorship and programming, simultaneously consolidating elements of continuity and initiating moments of rupture. Observed in this way, the case of post-pandemic festivals opens up interpretive keys not only for tracing the evolution of the recent past, but also for interrogating present practices and imagining future trajectories.

The poster presentation is based on two different research projects: *Theatres after social distancing. Institutional, curatorial and language changes after the pandemic* (2021–2023) and the ongoing *Cultural participation and performing arts: emerging models of relation and policy tools*. At its core lie case studies from 2021: the Santarcangelo Festival, Epica Festival (staged across Bologna and its province), and Cantieri Culturali Firenze developed by Compagnia Virgilio Sieni. Each case is analyzed through materials and fieldwork observations collected in real time. These festivals are subsequently compared with emerging initiatives in later years, including Vivaio Festival in Terlizzi (Ba), the projects of Anellodebole between Parma and Mantua, and the activities of Teatro Selvatico in the Cuneo mountains. Together, these experiences form a continuum in which post-pandemic experimentation has catalyzed a reconsideration of spectatorship and models of cultural participation. In so doing, they contribute to rethinking the very role and definition of the contemporary theatre festival.

Sascha Förster and Dominik Müller

Theatermuseum Düsseldorf

Sascha Förster has been director of Theatre Museum & Dumont Lindemann Archive Düsseldorf since 2021. He holds a PhD in Theatre and Media Studies from University of Cologne. His dissertation, *Zeitgeist and the Scenes of Imagination*, on the negation of history in scenographies in Weimar-era Berlin and in the brutalist architecture of London's National Theatre, will be published this year by Metzler. From 2013 to 2021, he worked as research assistant at Cologne University's Theatre Collection and Department of Media Culture and Theatre. His research interests include media and theatre cultures in the Weimar Republic, theatre architecture, theory of the 'theatre visit', and theatre histories of theatre workshops.

Dominik Müller, M.A., he is a dramaturg who works as a curator in Performing Arts. He studied Theatre Studies, Comparative Literature and Sociology in Munich and History and Slavistics in Cologne. He worked on independently produced projects as a dramaturg for prestigious Impulse Theater Festival and production house Gessnerallee in Zurich, CH. From 2018-2023 he was part of the curatorial team for interdisciplinary steirischer herbst festival in Graz, AUT. He collaborated with artists Ariel Efraim Ashbel and friends, Bread and Puppet Theater, Janez Janša, Nicoline van Harskamp, Richard Lowdon (Forced Entertainment), and Phil Collins among many others. His focus is on experimental, transdisciplinary approaches to theatre. His research focuses on social, political and

collective memory. Müller is currently a curator for TMD Theatermuseum Hofgartenhaus Düsseldorf and responsible for their nascent Festival Archiv NRW.

Panel III

“Kulturtage der Arbeit”. Traces of the Festival Ruhrfestspiele in TMD’s Stroux Collection and the Establishment of a Festival Archive NRW in Düsseldorf

Pascale Goetschel – Keynote Speaker
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Professor of Contemporary History at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, affiliated with the Center for Social History of Contemporary Worlds. She has published and edited several works on the cultural, political, and social history of contemporary France, as well as on the history of the performing arts, particularly theater. Among other works, she edited *Une histoire des festivals. XXe-XXIe siècles* (A History of Festivals: 20th-21st Centuries) in 2013 (in collaboration with Anaïs Fléchet, Patricia Hidioglou, Caroline Moine, and Julie Verlaine, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne), and published *Une autre histoire du théâtre. Discours de crise et pratiques spectaculaires. France, XVIIIe-XXIe siècles* (Paris, CNRS Éditions). She is currently focusing on the contemporary history of festivals, leisure activities, and performances.

A History of Theatre Festivals in Europe through the Lens of Networks (late 19th-early 21st Century): Inclusions, Exclusions, Divisions

Hanna Huber

University of Vienna

She submitted her PhD project “Performing on the Fringe. Examining the Neoliberalism of the Festival OFF d’Avignon” at the University of Vienna (Austria) in 2024, with research stays in Avignon, London, and Edinburgh. Conceptualised as mixed methods research, the project draws on a combination of qualitative interviews, quantitative data evaluation, participant observation, performance analyses, and archival research. Huber successfully completed Theatre, Film, and Media Studies, English and American Studies, as well as Romance Studies at the Universities in Vienna, Malta, and Avignon. Employed as postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Education at the University of Vienna since September 2024, Huber investigates mixed methods research in educational contexts. Her current project examines organisational structures and work practices in self-organised video projects by young people presented at the festival “video&filmtage” in Vienna.

Poster Session I

Mixed Methods for Festival Research. Synergising Methodological Approaches from Theatre Studies and the Social Sciences

Using the example of the Festival OFF d'Avignon, this contribution demonstrates that mixed methods can be an effective approach for festival research. When the research focus shifts from stage performance to its contextual conditions, it is advantageous to expand the methodological toolbox of theatre studies. Qualitative and quantitative methods from the social sciences enable researchers to explore organisational structures and work practices, complementing theatre studies' longstanding formalist interests in aesthetics.

At the OFF d'Avignon, the large number of shows makes it challenging to describe a festival-specific aesthetic, and yet more and more artists criticise that infrastructural conditions and economic forces at the festival lead to a homogenisation of artistic forms. Previous publications either avoid defining an OFF-specific aesthetic or make general assumptions without providing concrete examples. Additionally, scholars have reached seemingly contradictory conclusions: while Paul Rasse observes a “heterogeneity of theatrical forms” at the OFF d'Avignon (2003, p. 62), Alain Brunsvick describes a “standardisation, with ‘amounts’ that end up looking similar” (2005, p. 37).³

Therefore, a mixed methods research design proves useful. General results obtained from the statistical analysis of the festival programme provide a framework within which individual cases examined through performance analyses and interviews can be classified. At the same time, noteworthy exceptions that quantitative data might overlook can be analysed using qualitative methods. This example illustrates the value of combining methodological approaches from theatre studies and the social sciences to better understand how infrastructural and economic conditions shape festival-specific aesthetics.

Eleftheria Ioannidou

University of Groningen

Associate Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. Her research focuses on the twentieth and twenty-first-century reception of Greek theatre and drama, with a particular emphasis on issues of national identity, politics, and ideology. She is the author of *Greek Fragments in Postmodern Frames: Rewriting Tragedy, 1970-2005* (Oxford University Press, 2017) and has extensively written on the use of classical antiquity by fascist regimes during the interwar period and by contemporary far-right movements. Recently, she co-edited two special issues: the first, on the embodied and performative aspects of fascist appropriations of classical antiquity, published in *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* (Brill, 2023), and the second, exploring the revival of Greek drama in the open air under Mussolini, in *Classical Receptions Journal* (Oxford University Press, 2024). Ioannidou was a Humboldt Fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin between 2010-2012 and a research fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS)

³ For reasons of better legibility, French quotations have been translated into English.

in 2023. She currently serves as co-managing editor of the European Journal of Theatre and Performance of the European Association for the Study of Theatre and Performance (EASTAP).

Panel I

Reinventing the Tradition: Ancient Drama Festivals from the Interwar to the Post-War Era

The Festival at the Ancient Theatre of Syracuse and that at Epidauros in Greece are among the most prominent European festivals of ancient drama. They are staged in open-air Greek theatres situated within natural landscapes outside urban centres, drawing international audiences each year. These festivals also display historical parallels in their foundations and enduring legacies: both originated in the first half of the twentieth-century as part of a widespread movement of staging classical drama in the open air and reviving ancient sites as performance spaces. This revival was closely tied to a broader cultural turn toward Greek antiquity, mobilized in response to the social and cultural transformations brought about by modernity. The institutionalization of ancient drama festivals was shaped by historical, ideological, and political contexts. At the same time, these festivals were instrumental in shaping cultural discourses about classical antiquity, national identity, and the social role of theatre.

In both instances, the foundation of ancient drama festivals did not represent merely an aesthetic endeavour but was deeply implicated in political projects. The beginnings of the festival at Syracuse date back to 1913, when count Tommaso Gargallo founded a local committee with the vision of establishing a permanent institution for the staging of ancient drama at the Greek theatre. Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* became the first play to be staged there the following year. The development of the festival, however, was interrupted by WW1, and performances resumed only in 1921 with a production of the second part of Aeschylus' trilogy, *The Libation Bearers*. The driving forces behind the production of classical drama at Syracuse from its inception were the classicist Ettore Romagnoli and the modernist artist and set-designer Duilio Cambellotti. What began as a collaboration between a local aristocrat and classical scholars evolved into a grand-scale popular event during the 1920. The committee was formalized as a state organisation, renamed *Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico* (INDA) in 1925, following Mussolini's visit to Syracuse the previous year to attend the double-bill performance of *Antigone* and *Seven Against Thebes*.

In Greece, Sophocles' *Electra* directed by Dimitris Rondiris marked the first professional production to be shown at Epidauros in 1938, more than two decades after *Agamemnon* at Syracuse. The production was envisioned as the beginning of the regular use of the ancient site for the performance of ancient drama, a practice that gained momentum through the Delphic Festivals organized by Eva Palmer and Angelos Sikelianos in 1927 and 1930. The revival of Epidauros, in particular, was tied to the initiatives of Kostis Bastias, director of the National Theatre and Executive of Letters and Arts in the Ministry of Education under the para-fascist dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas, which seized power in 1936. Bastias's position in Metaxas's administration enabled him to implement his long-standing ideas for the performance of ancient Greek drama. A few months before Metaxas's rise to power, the National Theatre had introduced the Ancient Drama Weeks at the Roman Odeion of Herodes Atticus in Athens. Within this context,

Bastias found fertile ground to advocate for the use of Epidaurus, culminating in the 1938 production of *Electra* at the ancient site.

The call to reuse ancient theatres in the inter-war period went far beyond a simple antiquarian desire to stage classical drama in what was believed to be its original setting. It formed part of a broader effort to popularize classical drama alongside other emerging forms of popular theatre – a cultural ideal promoted under Mussolini and later embraced by Metaxas's regime. Bastias, who was familiar with the Syracuse Festival, closely followed developments in Italy and Germany in this area. In 1936, he visited Italy to observe the performances of the Thespian Cars (*Carri di Tespi*), an institution he soon introduced in Greece. Although he argued that ancient theatres provided the "natural" space for Greek drama, his focus was less on reconstructing the historical performance conditions of ancient drama than on highlighting the popular appeal of the plays, particularly after he became influential in shaping cultural policy under Metaxas's regime.

Both the Syracuse and Epidaurus festivals retained their status as major cultural events in the post-war period under transformed historical circumstances. At Epidaurus, however, no productions had been staged during WW2 and the subsequent Greek Civil War as the earlier efforts to establish a festival there were halted. Performances finally resumed in 1954 with the National Theatre of Greece's production of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, directed by Dimitris Rondiris, which paved the way for the official establishment of the Epidaurus Festival in 1955. In the case of Syracuse, the *Oresteia* once again became central to emphasizing continuity with the festival tradition inaugurated by *Agamemnon*. Just as *The Libation Bearers* had reopened the festival after WW1, in 1948 the festival staged Aeschylus' full trilogy for the first time. The sets and costumes for the production were designed by Cambellotti, while the choreography was created by Rosalia Chladek, who, like him, had been involved with the festival in the interwar period.

This paper takes the 1954 and 1955 productions of *Hippolytus* at Epidaurus and the 1948 staging of the *Oresteia* at Syracuse as points of departure for an exploration of how ideas about the staging of ancient drama evolved in the post-war period. Through a comparative examination of these case studies, I aim to show how the aesthetic, discursive, and institutional frameworks consolidated in the late 1930s continued to shape the performance and reception of classical drama, establishing what became the dominant mode of presentation during this period. The productions reflect what I have termed the 'Hellenic modernism of fascism' (in relation to Syracuse) and show the continued presence of notions of popular theatre that had been pervasive in the interwar years. The analysis seeks to demonstrate how festivals provided the means to reconceptualize cultural heritage, redefine the relationship between classical theatre and wider audiences, and embed ancient drama within modern repertoires.

Aleksandra Jovićević

Sapienza University of Rome

Professor of Performance Studies at the Department of History Anthropology Religion Arts Performance (Storia, Antropologia, Religion, Arte, Spettacolo, SARAS) at La Sapienza University of Rome, and a Visiting Professor at the University of Arts in Belgrade. Between

2015 and 2021 she was the Coordinator of the PhD program in Performance History and Theory at the SARAS and the Director of the Master in Video Editing, Digital Storytelling for Live Performance at the same Department.

Her most recent publications are: *The Cognitive Architecture of Performance Studies*, (*Architettura cognitiva dei performance studies*, Luca Sossella Editore, Roma, forthcoming) and *Orson Welles and Theatre: Shakespeare and Beyond*, (*Orson Welles e il teatro, Shakespeare e oltre*, Bulzoni, Rome 2022). She has also curated three consecutive issues of *Biblioteca teatrale* (BT 136, 137, and 138) on the latest research in performance and theatre studies in Italy. She is also the author of: "Voices from Semi-Peripheries: Pressure, Self-Censorship, and Micropolitics of Resistance in the Western Balkans" (with Milena Dragičević-Šešić), in *Theatre Censorship in Contemporary Europe, Silence and Protest*, (Ch. Megson and A. Etienne, eds., University of Exeter Press, 2024, pp 34-56); and "Aby Warburg's Performed Imageries in the Mnemosyne Atlas: The Unusual Birth of Performance Studies", in *Patographies of Modernity with Aby Warburg and Beyond*, (D. Padularosa, ed., Cambridge University Press, 2024, pp 250-267).

Panel I

Betwixt and Between, Belgrade's International Theatre Festival, 1967-1972

Yugoslav performance art in 1960s and 1970s is very well known among art and theatre historians. What is less known is the contribution that the Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF) had in the promotion and development of new artistic forms in the second part of 20th century. Using BITEF as a case study, I will try to give a broader insight into what went on during the festival in its first (and most interesting) years, between 1967 and 1974, which surpassed the Yugoslav context and became a platform for confrontation between East and West European performing art practices during the Cold War at its peak. For example, many East European artists were allowed to travel freely only to Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), the only country which was out of the Soviet block, whilst the artist from the West were welcomed in this non-aligned socialist country. Through its turbulent history (1943-1991) numerous reforms of Yugoslav economic and political system undoubtedly left traces on the very structure of its society and culture. Likewise, the position of arts and artists in Yugoslavia was quite different than in the rest of the socialist world: everything happened in very particular social and political conditions like the invention of self-management, creation of non-alignment movement, and experimental interculturalism⁴.

The emergence of performance and conceptual art in Yugoslavia, took place within the culture of socialist aestheticism, which was marked by the unspoken agreement between artists and authorities to uphold to the boundaries between the political and the aesthetic. The "new artistic practice," as it was known in Yugoslavia, represented not only a new approach to art production, but also a new form of organization within state-supported art institutions. Among their activities, these institutions included not only production and exhibition of art, but also the education of artists, curators and critics. The integration of art with social action can be recognized as the main emancipatory project under Yugoslav self-management. Seen from this perspective, the state that supported

⁴ Yugoslavia was comprised of six very different republics, all of them now independent states, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, and two independent regions Vojvodina, and Kosovo that became independent too.

BITEF festival had the power to create the impression of an “avant-garde” society so lasting that it outlived the country itself.

These institutions became platforms for new artistic practice, such as BITEF, as the first international festival of any kind in a socialist country. In the beginning, focus of the festival was on discovering new and emerging practices and forms in theatre outside of the country, as well as presenting works from countries outside of Euro-American context, such as member states of the Non-aligned Movement⁵. From its foundation in 1967 until 1974, a number of prominent theatre figures and companies were presented at BITEF: from Grotowski’s *Constant prince* and Living Theatre’s *Paradise Now*, to Schechner’s *Dionysus in 69* and Luca Ronconi’s *Orlando Furioso*; including also Bread and Puppet Theater, Peter Brook, Arianne Mnouchkine and Théâtre du Soleil, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, etc. The rich international theatre program was accompanied with a program of performances, events, exhibitions and lectures that were held at the Student Cultural Center (SKC), also in Belgrade. During the six years of activity, the Fine Arts BITEF featured numerous major artists of the second part of the 20th century art like Vito Acconci, Lucio Amelio, John Baldessari, Joseph Beuys, Daniel Buren, Germano Celant, Giuseppe Chiari, Hanne Darboven, Jan Dibbets, Johan Gerz, Jannis Kounellis, Joseph Kosuth, Sol Lewitt, Catherine Millet, Achille Bonito Oliva, Yoko Ono, Gina Pane, Guilio Paolini, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Giancarlo Politi, Tommaso Trini, Franco Vaccari, together with Yugoslav artists like Marina Abramović, Vlasta Delimar, Braco Dimitrijević, Sanja Iveković, Dalibor Martinis, Ilija Šoškić, Raša Todosijević, Slavoj Žižek, etc. The ideological function of BITEF as well as Fine Arts BITEF served also as a kind of cover up in the eyes of the international public that was not aware of the many forms of repression that went on in the country. Both festivals, as well as the Yugoslav culture as a whole, served to disguise ongoing political censorship in all spheres of public life, which was always kept hidden from public view⁶.

In my paper, therefore, I will try to re-establish the importance and centrality of this unique theatre festival and to give an insight at its status and connection to the epistemologies that derived from different practices, tracing the consequences in terms of methodologies, genealogies and epistemological shifts that went in parallel and in dialogue with practices both in West and East Europe. This is even more important because for a brief moment in the aftermath of 1968, and within the confines of state-funded art institutions in Yugoslavia, the protagonists and supporters of the “new artistic

⁵ Non European and American performances were not frequently presented, but for example, BITEF opened in 1967 with The Kathakali Dance Theatre from Kerala Kalamandalam (India) that performed *Ramayana*. This was followed in forthcoming years with: Kargahe Namayeche (Teheran), Abbas Naalbandian: *A Deep, Big and New Research about Fossils of 25th Genealogy Period, or 14th, 20th, or any other Period, there is no Difference*, direction: Arby Ovanessian (1970); Theatre Limited (Kampala), Robert Serumaga: *Renga moi*, direction: Robert Serumaga (1972); Duro Ladipo Cultural Theatre International (Ibadan, Nigeria), Duro Ladipo: *Qba kò so (The King did not Hang)*, yuroba-opera, direction: Duro Ladipo (1973); Ensemble National du Sénégal (Casamance, Senegal), *Dimbaya (Family)*—ceremonial music, rituals and dances of Senegal; choreography: Gausane Kerfala and Fode Cisse (1973); Teatro Brasileiro Viva Baija (Baija, Brazil), *Capoeiras*; direction: Gilda Grillo (1974), etc.

⁶ During the Cold War era, most East European countries, if not all, had a state organized censorship, implemented through different restrictive laws. In Yugoslavia, however, due to its specific position as a federal, non-aligned country, censorship was not institutionalized but transferred to self-governing cultural institutions. Many performances and exhibitions were banned by so-called Artistic committees, composed of loyal artists and local politicians.

practice” saw process of art and self-management as inseparable, thus bringing to the closest possible proximity two poles of a broad semantic range of “performance.”

Doriana Legge

University of L’Aquila

Researcher (Rtd-B) in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of L’Aquila, where she also serves as the Rector’s Delegate for Cultural Activities. In 2018, she founded *Aria – Festival di Teatro*, where she is Artistic Director. Her research focuses on early twentieth-century Italian theatre (*Inseguendo I Carabinieri. Beniamino Joppolo, ovvero la pratica della singolarità*, Bulzoni, Rome 2020), with particular attention to the survival strategies of the last women actor-managers (*Un Novecento scomodo. Il teatro di Emma Gramatica, Tatiana Pavlova e Anna Fougez*, Bulzoni, Rome 2022). She also investigates the orientations, functions, and perceptions of sound in theatre. She is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Teatro e Storia*.

Panel IV

The Years of TADUA: about the Festival Internazionale del Teatro Universitario in L’Aquila

This paper seeks to raise an initial set of questions about the *Festival Internazionale del Teatro Universitario* held in L’Aquila (Abruzzo) between 1972 and 1990, organized by TADUA, the *Teatro Accademico dell’Università dell’Aquila*. No historical reconstruction of this Festival exists; the surviving materials are very limited and – due to the devastating earthquake that struck the city in 2009 – almost entirely lost. Even private memories connected with the Festival and with TADUA are fragmented, reticent, and marked by trauma. What emerges, therefore, is a seemingly irretrievable history that nonetheless raises significant historical questions that demand investigation.

Two distinct but interconnected levels of analysis can be identified. The first concerns local memory: its rhythms of time and space, the sense of community generated by and around the Festival. The second relates to national and international conditions: the situation of university theatre in particular, and experimental theatre more broadly.

This Festival, now forgotten by most residents and lacking a coherent documentary record, unfolded alongside better-known theatrical stories in the city. It began during the golden years of the *Teatro Stabile d’Abruzzo* in the 1970s, and ended in 1990, just as Odin Teatret was establishing close ties with the city and the university’s chair of theatre history, held by Ferdinando Taviani from 1986 to 2012.

Between these two strong memories, the era of TADUA seems to disappear. We must therefore consider not only the cultural influences the Festival absorbed from its context, but also the ways in which its memory has been disrupted over time. This research seeks to give voice to previously unheard witnesses and to recover materials which, even before being buried by the earthquake, had never been of interest to institutions.

The TADUA Festival started at the very moment when university theatres were entering what is remembered as their decline. It is no coincidence that its first two editions coincided with the closing years of the longest-running *Festival Internazionale del Teatro Universitario* in Italy, the FITU of Parma. The Festival in L'Aquila debuted in 1972, during the hiatus of its Parma counterpart (1971-1972). When FITU returned in 1973 for its antepenultimate edition, TADUA paused for a year. The two festivals ran in parallel in 1974 and 1975 (the year FITU closed permanently). It was in L'Aquila, during a conference entitled *Università, teatro, territorio* (1976), that Ferruccio Marotti considered the season of university theatres to be over. Yet the city became, for a time, a space of possibility, a place to regroup and – especially after the closure of FITU – to experiment with new strategies of alliance. If this Festival is situated in a historical moment when CUT sought new forms of legitimacy, opening to the social, political, and cultural need to redefine relations between universities and their territories, then the geographical position of L'Aquila is also relevant. In those years, Italy was marked by demands for decentralization and by the call for cultural practices capable of reaching schools, neighbourhoods, subaltern groups, and the margins. The creation of an international festival in a peripheral city – lacking for democratic spaces for social and cultural aggregation, surrounded by mountains, and difficult to reach – speaks to both the fragility and determination of the project, as well as to its grounding in the needs of its time. Ultimately, the trajectory of this Festival – its identity, developments, choices, and the networks it established – can help us to grasp the contradictions through which a theatre imagined and practiced by very young people moved and transformed during the 1970s and 1980s.

This paper constitutes the first attempt to reconstruct the memory of the *Festival Internazionale del Teatro Universitario* in L'Aquila. It relies on oral history, private collections, and exchanges with colleagues; in the absence of a central archive, it seeks to trace the web of relationships that the Festival once generated. If the title suggests a case study, the Festival's condition as a "lost" event is above all an opportunity to reflect on the memorial structures of festivals and on the forms of historical inquiry they make possible.

Salvatore Margiotta and Mimma Valentino

University of Naples "L'Orientale"

Salvatore Margiotta is an Associate Professor of History of Modern and Contemporary Theatre. He is the author of the books *Il Nuovo Teatro in Italia 1968–1975* (Titivillus, 2013), *Il teatro futurista* (Carocci, 2022), and *La fucina teorica del nuovo teatro in Italia. Verso il teatro immagine* (Terreblu, 2023). He has written several essays, including *La scena moderna nel dibattito critico italiano alla fine degli anni Sessanta* ("Culture teatrali"), *Il Living Theatre in Italia*, *Lo spettacolo è un appuntamento. Il teatro di Roberto Latini e Fortebraccio Teatro*, *La pratica dell'eterodirezione nel teatro di Fanny & Alexander*, and *Il teatro di Lorenzo Gleijeses: un cantiere permanente aperto alla ricerca* ("Acting Archives Review"). He is currently the scientific director of the project "Archivi del Nuovo Teatro Italiano. Ricerca documentaria, catalogazione ed organizzazione scientifica".

Mimma Valentino has a PhD in History of Modern and Contemporary Theatre at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”, where she has worked and is currently working as a research fellow in different projects (‘Una regia in transizione’, 2024-2026; ‘Teorie della recitazione e nascita della regia. Archivio e catalogo critico delle fonti documentarie’, 2013; ‘Archivio internazionale trattati di recitazione’, 2010). She also participates in a research project coordinated by Lorenzo Mango (‘Nuovo Teatro Italiano. Archivio Storico’) and she is Editor of Acting Archives Review.

Her research interests focus on modern and contemporary theatre, acting theory, Performance Studies. She has authored several articles: *L’affresco lirico di Mariangela Gualtieri e Cesare Ronconi* («Acting Archives Review», 14, november 2017), *Le ‘isole galleggianti’ del Terzo Teatro* («Culture Teatrali», n. 27, 2018), *Il Nuovo Teatro in Italia: un’ipotesi di ‘messa in storia’*, in *Ivrea Cinquanta. Mezzo secolo di Nuovo Teatro in Italia*, (Akropolis Libri, 2018, pp. 60-66), *Process and product in Italian Theatre* («Eastap Journal», n. 2, may 2020), *Per una cartografia del ‘nuovo’ a Napoli. Alcuni luoghi della sperimentazione artistica e teatrale negli anni Sessanta* («Arabeschi», 19, 2022), *Il ‘concertato’ de lacasadargilla. Storia di un ensemble teatrale* («Acting Archives Review», 28, november 2024). She has published *Il Nuovo Teatro in Italia. 1976-1985* (2015), *Dal teatro analitico-esistenziale alla nuova spettacolarità. Le rassegne* (2023).

Panel IV

Festivals of the “New” between the 1960s and 1970s

The survey of cultural contexts, the identification of events, the reconstruction of meetings and round tables, the reflection on the role of certain publishing houses, and the study of critical debate are the tools through which it becomes possible to undertake a historiographical reconfiguration of the “new” — by weaving together the traces and clues that constitute its identity.

Within a process of reconnaissance that can be considered detailed and multifaceted, it is crucial to highlight a pivotal shift — not always sufficiently emphasized — of a theatrical avant-garde that moves from North to South. This geographical reversal, beyond bringing forth a new generation of groups, establishes an unprecedented cultural and intellectual landscape in which reflection is no longer dictated by the codification of a specifically “new” scenic language, but directed toward the pursuit of multidisciplinary — shared both on the operational and critical levels — capable of overcoming linguistic boundaries between theatre and visual arts.

To a historical reconstruction that places the coordinates of its narrative in what occurred in Rome, Turin, and Ivrea from the mid-1960s, another must be juxtaposed: one that finds, especially from the 1970s onward, in Naples, Salerno, and later in Cosenza, Padula, and Caserta, a new framework for the phenomena that characterize the Italian *Nuovo Teatro* (New Theatre).

In the 1970s, Giuseppe Bartolucci — an indispensable reference point for the history of the *Nuovo Teatro* in Italy — promotes or organizes, together with other intellectual “fellow travelers” (Franco Quadri, Achille Mango, Filiberto Menna, etc.), several important events that host the most advanced experiments of the decade’s theatrical scene. Rethinking the project design, aims, and modes of reception typical of traditional festivals, he conceives these initiatives — especially those organized personally in Salerno (1973–1976), Cosenza (1976 and 1978), Padula (1978), and Caserta (1979) — as

laboratories for theatrical research and critical writing, but also as crossroads for experimenters, intellectual forces, and citizens.

With the emergence of new research lines (*Teatro Immagine*, Post-Avant-Garde), within universities and through the work of academics engaged in studying the contemporary, a true theoretical workshop of the *Nuovo Teatro* develops. This fosters a narrative that, beyond emphasizing the centrality of spaces, artists, contexts, and local events, focuses on key figures essential to understanding, disseminating, and codifying the “new” in these years.

Bartolucci’s approach calls for constant dialogue between artists and critics, who claim direct involvement in the generative processes of the new; between theory and practice of theatre, art, and criticism, an inextricable weave is formed – an intimate connection grounded in an experimental logic that tests the identity of artistic creation.

At the same time, spectators are brought into play, directly engaged in the critical debate accompanying each artistic proposal, as is the wider citizenry – also through the dissemination of performances, happenings, and installations throughout the urban fabric.

Such a projectual tension responds to the intention of making festivals into uncoded spaces, “outside” institutional logics: not showcases, but places of “emergence,” reflection, and involvement. Places where one can pose questions about the advancing “new” and undertake field verification.

Incontro/Nuove tendenze (1973) is the first major event dedicated to experimental theatre after the *Convegno per un Nuovo Teatro* held in Ivrea in 1967. While the Ivrea conference represented an opportunity for the initial codification of the avant-garde experience – questioning the expressive and representational structure of theatre — the Salerno event, over its four editions, embodies the idea of a spectacular and cultural alternative to the official scene, inaugurating the activity of an open critical laboratory. Its function, on one hand, supports the contextualization of the presented works, and on the other, contributes to building a permanent space for reflection on linguistic processes.

According to Bartolucci’s intentions, a similar purpose also guides other events organized mainly in the second half of the 1970s: the *Colloqui internazionali Teatro, Spazio, Ambiente* (Padula, November 1–5, 1978), which not only hosted proposals from the Italian and international experimental scene, but also gathered artists and scholars to reflect on the state of post-avant-garde trends; and the event *Passaggio a Sud/Ovest. Freddo/Caldo. Alle origini della tragedia* (Caserta, June 22–24, 1979), which, through performances and critical debates, effectively marks the definitive decline of conceptual theatre and the birth of a new trend – the so-called “Metropolitan Spectacularity” or “New Spectacularity.”

These two events – along with the four editions of the Salerno festival and other initiatives organized in those years by Bartolucci and a group of intellectual “supporters” – once again reveal a distinctive theoretical-operational strategy. As had already occurred in the visual arts, the festival – like certain art exhibitions – is conceived as a kind of essay, a device-tool through which to “write” the processual dynamics of a specific vision of theatre.

Within the organizational and operational framework devised by Bartolucci, critical reflection thus becomes an organic element of the experimental phenomenon itself, contributing to the construction of the cultural fact as a whole – as an identity marker.

Ariadne Mikou

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Greek-born dance and performing arts artist-researcher who is currently residing in Italy. After graduating from the School of Architecture at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (GR) with a joined Bachelor's and Master's Degree, she moved to the USA in order to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Dance from The Ohio State University with support from the State Scholarship Foundation of Greece (IKY) and a Graduate Teaching Assistantship. Wishing to deepen her interdisciplinary choreographic practice she embarked on a fully-funded practice-as-research PhD at the University of Roehampton (London), which she concluded in 2018.

She contributes to academic journals and book anthologies that explore expanded and interdisciplinary choreographic practices, performance documentation, screendance issues, community making and site interventions and she is also a regular contributor for *Hystrio*, *The Theatre Times* and *Springback Magazine*, a magazine dedicated to the field of contemporary dance in Europe, especially its independent arts sector. In 2021, she was awarded a Research Grant for the Creative Europe project *Dancing Museums-The Democracy of Beings* from Ca' Foscari University of Venice where she also worked as a Research Assistant for the oral history SPIN project *Memory in Motion: Re-Membering Dance History* (2019–2022).

Currently, she conducts research on dance archives as a Postdoctoral Researcher at Ca' Foscari University of Venice for the project *CHANGES* - Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Sustainable Society and she is an independent dance and screendance curator.

Poster Session II

Tracing the Disappeared Videodance Festivals of Italy

According to recent research (Payri, 2018), Italy is one of the European countries with the most numerous and in some cases long-existing videodance festivals. With a curatorial activity that officially began in the 90s, videodance festivals have enabled the relationship between dance as an ephemeral act and its capture through audiovisual technologies to flourish into the hybrid art form known in Italian as *videodanza*. The artform of videodance gradually gained visibility across an array of different audiences and within the Italian borders, pioneers in this curatorial endeavour have been the Naples-based festival known as *Il Coreografo Elettronico* (1990); the *Danza & Video* festival (1991 *tbc*) – later transformed into an open archive known as *Cro.me*. – and the recently “resurrected” festival *Teatro Televisione Video TTV* (1985) in the region of Riccione in the Adriatic part of Italy.

The history of screendance is interlaced with the histories of cinema, video, digital technologies, archivisation and the industries of music, advertising and broadcasting. Furthermore, the scholar and/or practice-based approach of the form is usually shaped by institutional or artistic understandings of what screen, dance and choreography are. Keeping in mind this frame and employing web research in combination with bibliographic material and oral testimonies, this research focuses on the reasons that instigated the emergence of the above-mentioned festivals, their modes of survival and resistance in time prior to their disappearance and the practice of curation before the rise of web and

digital facilities. In this way, this research aims to shed light to the current ways of screendance curation, dissemination and appreciation across Italy and abroad.

Géraldine Moreau

Université Bordeaux Montaigne

Doctor in sociology of arts and culture (Sorbonne Nouvelle University) and associate researcher at ARTES (UR 24141), University of Bordeaux Montaigne (France). His thesis focused on the transmission of artisanal gestures, using bodily mime as an investigative tool. He continues his research on the arts of mime and gesture in France by questioning the processes of recognition and the historiography of contemporary mime. Based in Périgueux, where the “Festival Mimos” takes place (organised by L'Odysée, the only theatre dedicated to the Arts of the Gesture in France), Géraldine Moreau studies the historical-social issues of the festival and the links between an artistic discipline and a territory. He has recently been working on a comparative study of mime festivals in Europe.

Poster Session I

The Mimos Festival: Object of Cultural Specialization of a City and Mirror of a Troubled Legitimization of the Art of Contemporary Mime

In July 2023, the “Festival Mimos” in Périgueux (France) celebrated its 40th anniversary. As the oldest festival in France dedicated to mime, Mimos represents a unique case study about the way of contemporary mime’s history has been written during the 20th century. The semantic shift in how the festival defines its artistic domain - from “*Festival international du mime*” to “*Festival pour les arts du mime et du geste*,” and the last appellation “*Mimos, Festival des Arts du Geste*” - illustrates a broader conceptual and historiographical dispersion that reflects the complexities of defining and legitimizing this art form.

On the occasion of this milestone anniversary, a research initiative was launched to explore the festival’s archives, which include interviews with past and current directors (since 1983), press clippings (from 1987 onward), festival programs, and administrative records. This documentation reveals how Périgueux has gradually specialized in the cultural field of mime, beginning in 1986, in parallel with national cultural policies promoted by figures such as Jack Lang and supported by the french decentralization laws (Lois Defferre).

A key document guiding this analysis is a newspaper article titled “*Périgueux-sur-Mime*” (*Sud-Ouest* 3 août 1987), which symbolically positioned the city as a national reference point for mime art. The festival's trajectory is further examined through the lens of several educational and institutional projects linked to it: a Mime School, an Institute of Mime Arts, a National Center... These initiatives, though ambitious, were ultimately either abandoned or left incomplete. Their histories help reveal the structural and symbolic challenges mime has faced in gaining full institutional recognition as a legitimate contemporary art form in France.

This paper therefore questions how a festival can shape and influence a city's cultural identity over time, and how such events can act as both drivers and mirrors of evolving artistic legitimacy. In the case of Mimos, the festival not only reflects the aesthetic and terminological fluidity of contemporary mime but also embodies the tensions between local ambitions and national cultural policy frameworks.

By analyzing the archival material and failed infrastructural projects associated with Mimos, this poster sheds light on the broader issues of artistic recognition, policy-driven cultural specialization, and the role of festivals in constructing a "culture capital". It highlights how mime has attempted to position itself in the landscape of European mime festivals, while facing various intrinsic problems such as its (re)definition, recognition and legitimation.

Observing the emergence and development of the Mimos Festival in Périgueux offers a rich gateway to analyzing the historiography of French (and European) mime in the 20th century.

Arianna Morganti

Tor Vergata University of Rome

PhD student at the University of Rome Tor Vergata in Cultural Heritage, Education and Territory, with a research project on theatre, oral history, and *Estate Romana* (i.e. Roman Summer). Since 2023, she has been a teaching assistant in Theatre History at Rome Tor Vergata. Together with a research group, she presents at academic conferences, including: *Adelaide Ristori e il Grande Attore. Radicamento, adattamento, ed esplorazione di una tradizione* (November 2022), *Culture del Teatro moderno e contemporaneo. Per Angela Paladini Volterra* (May 2024) and *Luca Ronconi tra scena, vita e archivio* (May 2024). Among her recent publications: *Progetto Genazzano: l'utopica unione tra realtà e spettacolo* (Accademia University Press, 2024), *Luca Ronconi, eredità e memorie. La storia orale come metodo di ricerca e di didattica* (La Rivista di Engramma, 2025).

Poster Session II

***Estate romana* (1977- 1985): a New Cultural Policy between Urban Space and Participation**

Estate Romana (i.e., Roman Summer) was an annual summer event that took shape and came alive in Rome, the capital of Italy, from 1977 to 1985. The event was characterized by a plurality of languages and a diversification of programs, having an ever-evolving dialectic influenced by conversations between movements and institutions. *Estate Romana* was a political and cultural initiative of Renato Nicolini, then Councillor for Culture in Rome, part of broader urban and cultural decentralization policies that emerged in the early 1970s. Specifically, within the context of events generally labelled with the expression "season of the ephemeral", parties, shows, plays, and festivals were integrated into a wider and targeted political, architectural, cinematographic, and theatrical program, with the latter still under-researched.

Based on previous studies (Fava 2017; Guarino 2020; Gualtieri 2023), *Estate Romana* marked the beginning of a conversation and inquiry into cultural interventions at the local level, during a troubled and significant period in Italian history. Moreover, the event coincided with efforts to strengthen connections and cooperation between the promoting institutions – including regional, provincial, and municipal authorities, the regional committee of the Italian Cultural and Recreational Association (ARCI), and numerous municipalities that embraced Renato Nicolini's initiative.

The present study aims to investigate the genesis of *Estate Romana* (1977-1978), situated within its specific political and social context. More in detail, it reconstructs the connections between *Estate Romana* and the then communist municipal leadership, Giulio Carlo Argan, a left-wing politician, elected mayor of Rome on 9 August 1976. During the 1970s, the municipal theatre working group, appointed by the Italian Communist Party to supervise theatrical development, adopted a radically innovative approach (Grieco 1976), which was inspired from the cultural decentralization policies of those times, and had regional bodies and local authorities serving as keystones for a qualitative transformation of the theatrical structures at the local level, where the masses demanded for autonomy, participation, and access to culture.

Accordingly, this research will focus on the theatrical dimension of *Estate Romana*, examining the role played by *Teatro di Roma*, whose artistic direction was curated by Luigi Squarzina, and, more generally, its positive and collaborative relationships with other productive theatrical entities, such as cooperatives, including the Association for Experimental Theatre (ATISP) and ARCI (Nicolini 1977). Compared to the first edition of *Estate Romana*, when the theatrical program only included a few cinematographic, folkloristic, and musical events, the 1978 edition marked a turning point in curatorship: *Teatro di Roma* and Roman associations began to emphasize their contribution to both central and suburban areas of the city, offering shows and technical resources and means that reflected the requests and priorities of local bodies. Indeed, within the governing organs with decision-making powers, such as the Office for Culture, Tourism, and Performing Arts, were integrated representatives of the local and democratic participatory bodies, as well as members of the municipal districts. The deliberation submitted to the *Consiglio Comunale* for approval on 29 July 1978 highlights the necessity to continue and further develop *Estate Romana*'s activities "providing opportunities for local cultural identity and for permanent cultural structures".

How can the cultural politics of *Estate Romana* be positioned compared to other projects of decentralization promoted in Europe at the same time? Focusing on the interaction between repertory and experimental theatre, in 1978, *Estate Romana* promoted a collaboration between *Teatro di Roma* and *Teatro Club*. Did this integration between institutional and independent circuits constitute an original model of cultural management? *Estate Romana* has produced a variety of archival sources, including written documents, audio recordings, and photographs. Which sources were primarily used to initiate the research?

Fahimeh Najmi

Université of Paris 8

Lecturer at the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, associate researcher at the “Scènes du monde, création, savoirs critiques” Laboratory (EA 1573) – University of Paris 8, Fahimeh Najmi holds a doctorate in Theatre Studies from the Sorbonne Nouvelle. She is the author of *Le Théâtre, l’Iran, et l’Occident* (L’Harmattan, 2018) and of articles in *New Theatre Quarterly*, *Registres* and *Alternatives théâtrales*. After being deprived of work in Iran following five years of teaching, including at the Faculty of Art and Architecture of Tarbiat Modares University (TMU) in Tehran, she now lectures and conducts research in France. In parallel, translator (among others of *Quelques histoires des pluies d’amour et de mort* by Abbas Nalbandian, L’Espace d’un instant, 2023) and critic, her current research and writings focus on the question of identity, the role of women and ideologies in theatre.

Panel II

Shiraz’s Festival of Arts: A Twisted Mirror for An Ideology in Disarray

The year 1967 in Iran was not only marked by the launch of the Shiraz Arts Festival, but also by another notable event: the coronation of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, which took place on 26 October of that year, some 26 years after his accession to the throne. Only two months separated this event from the first edition of the Shiraz Arts Festival. And it was the festival that took place first, before this "Monarchical Spectacle," during which Mohammad Reza was finally able to take the throne himself and place it on his own head. This accorded the Shiraz Arts Festival the significance of a key milestone in the Pahlavi regime, and in light of subsequent events, it came to be seen as a prelude to the final decade of the monarchy in Iran. But how could a simple arts festival, featuring a few theatre and dance performances as well as musical performances, have reached such significance? How did what was initially conceived as a place for a meeting between authentic art and traditions from the East and valuable examples of Western art lead to a deep and lasting rift between Iran and the West? This will be the main focus of my presentation.

Phoebe Patey-Ferguson

Rose Bruford College

Lecturer and Programme Director of MA Queer Performance at Rose Bruford College (Kent, UK). They specialise in the social contexts of contemporary performance and live art, focusing on queer and trans practices in festivals and nightlife. Their work has explored international theatre festivals through the lens of the Sociology of Theatre and Performance, with their doctoral thesis examining the history and practice of international theatre festivals in Britain through a case study of the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), which will be published in a forthcoming monograph with Bloomsbury. Phoebe co-edited a special issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* on Live Art (2024), in which they co-authored the article *Cronies, Cliques and Lovers: Queer Friendship as Anti-*

Institutional Practice in UK Live Art Festivals. They co-convene the Queer Futures Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR), and are co-research lead for The Night Club: an international queer performance research network. They have worked as a producer with LIFT, In Between Time (IBT), and VFD, delivering international festivals of theatre and live art, and serve as co-chair of the board for Duckie.

Panel III

Reading Between Voids: From Living Archive to Digital Absence in LIFT's History (1981-2024)

This paper emerges from grappling with archives throughout writing my PhD on LIFT (the London International Festival of Theatre), and in returning to this project as I revise this material into a monograph for publication. In the last fifteen years, I have worked with LIFT as an audience member, as an unpaid intern, as a paid producer, as a PhD student and as an academic – approaching and experiencing the festival through a myriad of methodologies: the material and immaterial, the social, historical, data, photographs, recordings, gossip, interviews, scandals, pleasures, disappointments and thrills. I feel the archive differently than I did a decade ago, I return to it altered, it alters me, and I transform it through these re-engagements. Hidden things come to the surface, other moments sink out of sight. I speak here as an incomplete archive, as missing pieces of data, while alert to other currents that resonate to this present moment.

I am interested in how my researcher's body is an incomplete, shifting archive of LIFT, engaged in writing an authoritative account of LIFT and how to read the incompleteness of such a task alongside the voids of the archive. This thinking began, as in my original paper proposal for this conference in attempting to read silence and absence as constitutive elements of festival historiography, rather than as gaps to be overcome or lacunae to be filled. I had been concerned with how the festival's dramatic shift from seemingly comprehensive paper documentation to irretrievable digital corruption cannot be understood as simply technological misfortune, but rather as evidence of profound institutional and cultural transformation under neoliberalism. But I also began to think about how these shifts have affected me during my long period of sustained research, and how reading these alongside each other reflects and constitutes changing priorities and political pressures. Importantly, this contributes to why considering institutional histories and dynamics of power is vital to understanding how festivals connect (or disconnect) with the artists and audiences they hold.

I am presenting myself here as a LIFT Living Archive, but the official LIFT Living Archive is held at Goldsmiths in London and offers extraordinary insight into the meticulous documentation practices that sustained the festival's first two decades. Funding correspondence reveals the intricate networks of international cultural diplomacy that enabled LIFT's programming during the late Cold War period, whilst artistic exchanges document systematic challenges to the conservative theatrical establishment that dominated London's cultural landscape. Administrative records map the festival's evolving position in the field of cultural production, revealing how founders Rose de Wend Fenton and Lucy Neal deliberately positioned LIFT as an antagonistic force against dominant theatrical modes of practice in Britain. These materials capture not merely institutional memory but the texture of cultural resistance: programme notes that explicitly critique Thatcherite policies, correspondence networks spanning the globe, and

the systematic documentation of theatrical practices that deliberately violated parochial British norms.

The official Living Archive has dwindled into a slow death, chilled in the perfect archival storage of the brown cardboard university boxes, rarely exposed to light, touch or response – not due to neglect but the lack of availability of funds to bring it into an encounter with audiences (I've helped write several rejected applications that have hoped to do this). My PhD funding has been one of the only resources to allow someone (me) to think-with and feel-with this material. However, what I encountered after reaching the end of this institutional storage was a dramatic rupture falling at the start of the new millennium. I was given the hard drives that contained LIFT's records from 2002-2009 and found they were irreparably corrupted, creating voids of evidence that coincide with the Festival's own rupture and experimental period of The LIFT Enquiry – abandoning a biennial festival model to engage with a deep reflection of what a festival should be in what Fenton and Neal termed 'a process that could open up the possible future development of the organisation' whilst taking stock of theatrical, cultural, social and political changes occurring in London during LIFT's existence.

Here, I also explore a rupture in this project as a researcher this year. I had been so confident in these voids. This summer, the outgoing General Manager of LIFT contacted me to let me know they were clearing out an old storage unit, which when I had done my PhD research had just been thought to contain old production materials. But among the tarpaulin, old festival merch, lights, tools and all kinds of technical bits and bobs was a huge amount of forgotten and mislaid archival materials. An unbelievable amount of paper, dossiers, minutes, programmes, printed emails and fax printouts relating to the 2000s. A reminder of the sudden surge of technologies at the millenium – from floppy disks, to CDS, mp3 players, minidisks, CD-ROMs and computer towers. Some working, and some corrupted. I was in awe. It's tempting to call it a treasure trove, but it produced immense stress. I had so few research days to tear myself away from teaching to sort and collate this material before the storage unit had to be cleared due to a new wave of budget cuts. I had to help decide what should be kept, which had to be extremely limited. I had to think about what should be kept, why, and for whom.

LIFT's digital corruption becomes readable not as an unfortunate technological failure but as evidence of cultural and political pressures that render certain forms of institutional memory impossible to sustain – what Ann Cvetkovich might recognise as institutional 'archives of feelings' where absence itself constitutes meaningful data about cultural and political transformation. This mess of records speaks to cultural amnesia, traces of resistance being erased, human errors incompatible with the promise of polished business practices. The approach developed here requires methodological creativity that embraces rather than resolves the tensions between presence and absence, documentation and ephemerality, recognising that organisational knowledge is held as a set of fragile connections through personal relationships and embodied experience. In positioning myself as another kind of living archive, I consider how festival histories are constituted through embodied encounters that resist the fantasy of objective documentation. This ongoing work has demonstrated that recognising the incomplete, fragmented and contradictory nature of these visible, missing and corrupted archives reflects rather than obscures the contested terrain on which festivals operate.

Alessandro Pontremoli – Keynote Speaker

University of Turin

PhD, Full Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Turin, where he coordinates the Performance and Music Curriculum within the PhD Programme in Humanities. He serves as Scientific Coordinator of the SCT – Social and Community Center in Turin and is a member of the Knowledge Community of the CCW – Cultural Welfare Center in Turin. He is Editor-in-Chief of Mimesis Journal. In 2015, he was awarded the ‘Luigi Pirandello National Prize for Theatre – Essay Section’ for his volume *Danza e Rinascimento. Cultura coreica e “buone maniere” nella società di corte del XV secolo* (Macerata, 2011). He is a Fellow of the Ambrosiana Academy in Milan and a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences in Turin. His research, both historical and theoretical, focuses primarily on the forms and aesthetics of dance, especially from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries as well as in the contemporary era, and on social and community theatre. Among his monographs are: *La danza nelle corti di antico regime. Modelli culturali e processi di ricezione fra natura e arte* (Bari 2012); *La danza 2.0. Paesaggi coreografici del nuovo millennio* (Roma-Bari 2018); *La danza: organizzare per creare. Scenari, specificità tecniche, pratiche, quadro normativo, pubblico* (with G. Ventura, Milano 2019 and 2025); *L’arte del ballare. Danza, cultura e società a corte fra XV e XVII secolo* (Bari 2021).

Dance Festivals in Italy: Between Programming and Curatorial Dramaturgy

By employing the operative concepts of dramaturgy and choreography, situated within theatre studies, this paper – starting from a number of best practices examined in my contribution – seeks to understand how, through the activation of new and effective political actions, the dance festival in Italy, together with its related projects, may serve both as an observatory of the cultural transformations currently taking place and as a catalyst for multiplying alliances capable of initiating a process of transformation and change within Italian society.

Heike Roms – Keynote Speaker

University of Exeter

Professor in Theatre and Performance at the University of Exeter in the UK. She has published on contemporary performance practice, the history of performance art in a British context, performance historiography and archiving, performance and ecology and performance as a mode of knowledge formation and dissemination. She is currently working on a book on the participation of children in the history of performance art.

Speaking Festivals: Oral Methodologies and Performance Historiography

How can the histories of theatre festivals be accounted for through oral history? The use of oral history to record aspects of theatre and performance history is widespread and

growing. There are many active oral history projects in the field, and their foci range from theatre buildings to amateur drama groups, from the oeuvre of individual performance artists to the output of national theatre companies, from the practices of performance-making to the experiences of theatre-going. Yet relatively few initiatives explore the histories of theatre festivals, and even fewer have reflected critically on oral history's potential within festival studies.

Existing scholarship has considered the use of oral history material in performance (Pollock 2005); the performance qualities of oral history itself (Abrams 2010); and the application of oral history methods in performance research (Johnson 2015). But what particular demands do theatre festivals pose to historians, and how might oral history help to address them?

This presentation introduces oral history as a methodology within theatre and performance historiography. And it will propose three features of theatre festivals that oral history is particularly suited to explore: theatre festivals' temporary nature, their dispersed settings and their function as nodes within networks and exchange.

Giulia Taddeo

University of Genoa

Senior Researcher in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Genoa. She holds a PhD in Film, Music, and Theatre from the Department of the Arts at the University of Bologna, where she was a postdoctoral research fellow between 2018 and 2021. She has been a research grantee at the Centro Internazionale di Studi della Civiltà Italiana Vittore Branca and a visiting research fellow at IASH – Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh. She is the author of the monographs *Un serio spettacolo non serio. Danza e stampa nell'Italia fascista* (2017), *Festivaliana. Festival, culture e politiche di danza al tempo del "miracolo italiano"* (2020), and *Danze futuriste: testi e pretesti* (2023).

Panel II

Preserving the Fire: Classical Ballet and Cultural Disputes at the Festival of Edinburgh (1947-1952)

Based on archival materials kept at the National Library of Scotland, such as theatre programs, photographs and press reviews, the paper analyses the presence of dance at the International Festival of Music and Drama in Edinburgh between 1947, the year of its foundation, and 1952, when the Scottish event welcomed the New York City Ballet led by George Balanchine for the first time. In that same year, just before arriving in Edinburgh, the company had been a guest, in Paris, of the great festival "Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century", organized by the Russian composer Nicolas Nabokov, then general secretary of the Congress for the Cultural Freedom: the event aimed at building a bridge between Europe and the United States, underlining, from a clearly anti-Soviet perspective, how free artistic expression was the glue that united the two continents, guaranteeing the flourishing of masterpieces in all the arts.

The choice of these two chronological references, 1947 and 1952, defines a timeframe for discussing two hypotheses. The first concerns the existence, within the countries of the so-called Western bloc (but especially the United Kingdom, the United States and France), of a “common culture” in the field of ballet. In the period considered here, this commonality manifests itself not only through the circulation of artists and companies, but also through criticism; in fact, there are several publications, especially in the English language, in which American, English and French critics and scholars share historical references, as well as theoretical and aesthetic principles. The second hypothesis, which calls into question the first, notes how, within the Western bloc, the concept of “classical” is far from peacefully shared, but, on the contrary, it bears mutually antagonistic values, linked to the representation of the national identity of different countries. To argue this second point, I will compare the two versions of *Swan Lake* that the English company Sadler's Wells Ballet and the New York City Ballet present at the Edinburgh Festival, with particular attention to the narratives offered by the contemporary press.

Tomaž Toporišič

University of Ljubljana

PhD, dramaturg and theatre theorist, full professor, the head of the research group of the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, University of Ljubljana and an associate member of the Slovene Academy of Science and Arts. He was the Artistic Director (1997-2003) and a dramaturg (2003-2016) of Mladinsko Theatre. In 1995, he co-founded and artistically directed the Exodos Festival, the first international festival of contemporary performing arts in independent Slovenia that has played a vital role in promoting innovative and boundary-pushing artistic expressions. He has been a curator of several exhibitions for the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space (PQ). He is the author of six books on contemporary performing arts. His essays include *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*. De Gruyter 2013); *Oliver Frlić, an Artist Touching Society's Raw Nerves* (in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary European Theatre and Performance*. Routledge 2023); *The Slovene Historical Avant-Garde and Europe in Crisis (Theatralia, 2022)*. *Trieste–Ljubljana–Zagreb–Belgrade. Linking Slovene, Italian and Serbian avant-garde* (in *The European avant-garde: a hundred years later*. Brill, 2023). His primary interest is to create a dialogue between theory and practice.

Panel IV

Festivals as Agents of Cross-Border Aesthetic and Identity Transformation

This proposal focuses on three cross-border and transnational festivals in Central Europe that emerged following the fall of the Berlin Wall. It explores a specific transitional period – from the Cold War era to the post-socialist realities of a newly redefined Europe – and the evolving conceptualisation of a multi-centred Europe shaped through dialogue between East and West, North and South. The festivals in focus are Eurokaz (Zagreb, Croatia), Mittelfest (Cividale, Italy), and Exodos (Ljubljana, Slovenia), all of which played

pivotal roles in the 1990s in shaping the theatrical and cultural landscapes of border regions between Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia.

Eurokaz, the Zagreb Festival of New Theatre, was first held in 1987. It was founded in response to a cultural vacuum in Zagreb following the disappearance of the International Festival of Student Theatres in the 1960s and the Young People's Theatre Days (1974-1977). As its founder Gordana Vnuk explains, "Eurokaz was created as a support and platform for a small area of twentieth-century theatre history that, in the now distant eighties, stirred up Europe and initiated a number of bold impulses. These impulses had arrived from the fields of technology and science, visual arts, new media, dance and movement – rejecting the prevailing logocentric order of the time."⁷

Mittelfest was launched in 1991 in a highly formal and political context that could today be seen as a forerunner to renewed East-West dialogue. It was established within the framework of the Pentagonale initiative, which brought together the governments of Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. The goal was to open theatrical and performative borders between East and West, North and South. However, that same year, the Yugoslav Wars began, casting a shadow over its idealistic ambitions.

Exodos, launched in 1995 in Ljubljana as the International Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts, was the first of its kind in newly independent Slovenia. It aimed to forge strong connections with international trends in performing arts while promoting emerging Slovene artists. As noted by Jana Pavlič: "The 1980s exploded in Ljubljana. This final stop of the Moscow metro, as some called it, transformed from a small, sleepy provincial town into a capital of sub- and alternative culture, where the marginalised, the rejected, and the offended found their place... Punk among Slovenes, gay and lesbian movements, and all the other queer and strange groups engaged in actions to introduce civil society forcefully carved out space for themselves in this small, sleepy province – one that had always feared anything unusual, eccentric, or in any way connected to unofficial versions of art and culture."⁸

Exodos shared Eurokaz's ambition to create a new platform for contemporary performing arts in a peripheral region between East and West, amid the shifting socio-political landscape of post-socialist and post-non-aligned Europe shortly before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Taking Erika Fischer-Lichte's observation into account – that "festivals, in general, can be characterised by a dual paradox: on the one hand, the paradox of liminality and periodicity, and on the other, that of regulation and transgression"⁹ – this study will examine, how these three festivals created their own temporality: a liminal time that disrupts the established temporal order and functions as a threshold experience.

We aim to investigate how these festivals, born during the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the blurring of boundaries between East and West, navigated the dual nature of festivals. On one side, they were subject to institutional and political frameworks; on the other, their core essence involved suspending and transgressing everyday norms.

⁷ Vnuk, Gordana: »New Theatre, Beginnings. « In: *20. Years of Eurokaz*, Zagreb, pp. 11-17: 12. 2006, https://monoskop.org/images/a/a3/20_Years_of_Eurokaz_2006.pdf.

⁸ Pavlič. Jana; Pintar, Boris: *Castration Machines*, Maska, Ljubljana, 2001, https://sl.wikisource.org/wiki/Kastracijski_stroji.

⁹ Fischer-Lichte, Erika: »European Festivals«, in *The Cambridge Companion to International Theatre Festivals*, pp. 87 – 100, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108348447.006>.

Paradoxically, while attempting to challenge dominant systems, festivals also – unintentionally – contributed to maintaining the political status quo.

This research will examine the artistic, social, and political impacts of these festivals on the communities that conceived, organised, and hosted them. We aim to understand to what extent and in what ways the festivals created unique spaces for negotiation between artistic expression and socio-political identity – between local and global, centre and periphery. How did they contribute to shaping a shared European identity and community?

Using Fischer-Lichte's terminology, we will explore how these festivals led to the formation of new identities, the reinforcement of existing ones, and the emergence of aesthetic communities. How did performances from different cultures transform heterogeneous audiences into participants in a shared aesthetic, theatrical, and even political community – during the festival and beyond?

We will also demonstrate how Eurokaz and Exodos (and, to a certain extent, Mittelfest) renewed the modernist ideals first envisioned by Max Reinhardt and the early 20th-century theatrical avant-garde. That is, to offer extraordinary artistic experiences beyond the reach of institutional cultural organisations during the regular season. These festivals asserted their ontological difference, positioning themselves as producers of the unforeseeable – countering mainstream artistic production in the era of the performative and festival turn of the 1980s and 1990s, and echoing the spirit of the festivals of the 1960s and 1970s.

To conclude, we return to the words of theatre critic Roberto Canziani, writing on *QuanteScene! ciò che succede nei teatri*, about Mittelfest: “Mittelfest, for example, has 34 editions behind it—a substantial legacy. And since its inception in 1991 (when the fall of the walls seemed to represent hope, though things didn't turn out that way), Mittelfest has reinvented itself at least a dozen times. It has weathered the Balkan wars and digital revolutions, climate change and the generations to come: X, Y, Z...”¹⁰.

This observation holds true not only for Mittelfest but also for all three festivals examined in this study.

Daniele Vergni

Sapienza University of Rome

PhD in Theatre Studies, Performing Arts, Cinema and Digital Performance Technologies (Sapienza University of Rome), Daniele Vergni works on historiographical, theoretical-critical, and methodological issues concerning interdisciplinary practices in the Italian Neo-Avant-Gardes of the late twentieth century, with a particular focus on Performance Art, Nuovo Teatro Musicale, and Postavanguardia Teatrale; on the acoustic image (vocality and sonority) of twentieth-century and contemporary performance (theatre, music, dance, performance art); and on new epistemologies in performance studies. He was an editor of the journal *Sciami|Ricerche* and has collaborated with *Alfabeta2*, *Effimera*, *OperaViva*, *Antinomie* and *Artribune*. In addition to publishing in academic journals

¹⁰ Canziani, Roberto. »Mittelfest 2025. Ascoltare i luoghi. Con la coda dell'orecchio. « In: *QuanteScene! ciò che succede nei Teatri*, <https://robertocanziani.eu/quantescene/tag/mittelfest/>.

(*Biblioteca Teatrale*, *Acting Archives*, *Arabeschi*, etc.) and collective volumes, he has published with Bulzoni: *Nuovo Teatro Musicale in Italia (1961-1970)* (2019), *Comportamento Performance Art Nuova Performance. L'azione tra le arti in Italia (1960-1982)* (2024), and, with Roberto Taroni, *Dizionario Taronici-Cividin. Concetti e pratiche performative* (2024).

Poster Session II

Between Theatre Festivals and Visual Exhibitions: Performance art in the Early 1970's

In the years marking the transition between the 1960s and 1970s, performance art was no longer a strictly emerging phenomenon in terms of practices, but it remained so in terms of distribution. There were still no circuits, and the launch of festivals dedicated to performance art was still a long way off. It was at this time that performance art began to wander between theatre festivals that reflected on the visual dimension and interdisciplinarity (Bitef 5, 1971) and visual art exhibitions conceived as theatre festivals (Teatro delle mostre, 1968). Some exhibitions began to highlight, on the one hand, the mutual influence between theatre and performance art and, on the other, the need to attempt to develop exhibitions and festivals that would generate this confusion (e.g. *Informazioni sulla presenza italiana*, 1971). In this years, art curators have been experimenting with theatre festivals as fertile ground for linguistic hybridisation. How have artists shaped their practices in relation to the performance space and festival audiences? What curatorial visions have they drawn from the festival format and theatrical imagery?

While exhibitions invade outdoor spaces with environments and performances, leaving art galleries behind, gallery owner Plinio De Martiis affirms the gallery as a space for ephemeral events through the adoption of the “festival” format, looking to theatre. He calls it Teatro delle mostre (Theatre of Exhibitions), staged in the spaces of La Tartaruga in Rome, where from 6 to 31 May 1968, artistic events take place from 4 to 8 p.m., one per day per artist, presented outside “on the bill”. Conceived and organised as a theatre festival, in several cases the festival took the form of a living environment that shifted performative research from individuality to sociality through a reflection on the spectator pact.

The theatre festival format not only informs but is also the location of *Pèrsona*, an “exhibition of theatrical gestures”, a performance review conceived and curated by Achille Bonito Oliva for the Italian art section of Bitef 5, the Belgrade International Theatre Festival (10-20/09/1971). The novelty is that the performances are staged on a stage, an unusual venue for performance art, which provokes in artists already engaged in performance a need to verify already established hypotheses. After only four days, the same curator and the same artists are present at the 7th Biennale de Paris, which will feature a real stage among its locations, where a few artists perform, while most choose to perform without a stage. Information on the Italian presence (December 1971) provides details on the Italian artists presented during the 7th Biennale. This time, however, the number of performances increases and the stage disappears. After the experiences of *Pèrsona* and the 7th Biennale, Achille Bonito Oliva and the Incontri Internazionali d'Arte association adopted festival strategies based on limited-time programmes, meetings, presentations and exchanges (especially of documentation).

Following these events allows us to grasp new strategies for the distribution of the ephemeral in the arts, born precisely from the interference between the devices of the theatre festival and those of contemporary art exhibitions.

Theatre Festivals between Local and Global

Rethinking Theatre and Performance in Italy from 1950s to the 1970s

PRIN Research Group

University of Rome Tor Vergata Unit

Roberta Ferraresi

Associate professor of Theatre Studies at Cagliari University – Department of Literature, Languages and Cultural Heritage, where she teaches in several BA and MA Courses at the Faculty of Humanities, and leads the project “Alive - Digital Tools for Research and Teaching in Media and Performing Arts” (2024-25). She is part of the Editorial Board of “Stratagemmi” and “Mimesis Journal” as well as of the Scientific Board the “MJ Books” serie (Accademia University Press) and of the “Ormete” project.

Her research, shared through many essays and conferences, concerns the poetic-political movements of rethinking the performing arts in the 20th/21st centuries; the history and developments of Theatre and Performance Studies; performing arts' historiography, also in its intersections with the Internet Studies.

Besides the academic work, she has always been actively involved in the contemporary theatre: dealing with theatre criticism, serving as advisor for private and public institutions within processes of cultural policies and funding; developing educational projects in collaboration with several theatres and festivals.

In the context of the project “Theatre Festivals Between Local and Global” she has been part of the Rome Tor Vergata's research unit, where she worked on Santarcangelo Festival.

Tancredi Gusman

Associate Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies at the Tor Vergata University of Rome. He is a member of the research project “Theatre Festivals between Local and Global: Rethinking Theatre and Performance in Italy from the 1950s to the 1970s” (PRIN 2022 – Next Generation EU) and serves on the scientific advisory board of the Interuniversity Research Centre for the Memory of the Performing Arts (MAP). From 2021-2024 he co-convened the Historiography Working Group of the IFTR. He also led the EU Horizon 2020 project ‘Between Evidence and Representation: History of Performance Art Documentation from 1970 to 1977’ at the Freie Universität Berlin and was Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at the International Research Center ‘Interweaving

Performance Cultures' (2017-2019). His works investigate the politics of representation and spectatorship, and the histories of performance art, performance documentation, and theatre criticism. He translated Erika Fischer-Lichte's *The Transformative Power of Performance* into Italian (Carocci, 2014) and published the monograph *The Harp and the Sling: Kerr, Ihering, and the German Theatre Criticism from the End of the Nineteenth Century to National Socialism*; (Serra 2016; orig. Italian). He is editor of the volume *Reconstructing Performance Art: Practices of Historicization, Documentation and Representation* (Routledge 2023).

Eleonora Luciani

Research Fellow at the University of Rome Tor Vergata within the PRIN 2022 project *Theatre Festivals between Local and Global: Rethinking the Italian Stage between the 1950s and the 1970s*. She received her PhD from the University of L'Aquila with a dissertation on nineteenth-century theatre, entitled *L'altro Ottocento di Fanny Sadowski. Percorsi, repertorio, mestiere di una prima attrice*, which is currently being developed into a monograph. Her research interests revolve around nineteenth-century Italian theatre and actresses, as well as contemporary experimental theatre. She is the author of «Io sono due volte io». *Azione poetica, creazione scenica: un'indagine sul Teatro Valdoca, Arabeschi* (2021), and *Fanny Sadowski: i primi anni e la scelta di Napoli, Arti dello spettacolo/Performing Arts* (2022). She also coordinates the research project *Visionario* at the University of L'Aquila.

Arianna Morganti

PhD student at the University of Rome Tor Vergata in Cultural Heritage, Education and Territory, with a research project on theatre, oral history, and *Estate Romana* (i.e. Roman Summer). Since 2023, she has been a teaching assistant in Theatre History at Rome Tor Vergata. Together with a research group, she presents academic conferences, including: *Adelaide Ristori e il Grande Attore. Radicamento, adattamento, ed esplorazione di una tradizione* (November 2022), *Culture del Teatro moderno e contemporaneo. Per Angela Paladini Volterra* (May 2024) and *Luca Ronconi tra scena, vita e archivio* (May 2024).

Among her recent publications: *Progetto Genazzano: l'utopica unione tra realtà e spettacolo* (Accademia University Press, 2024), *Luca Ronconi, eredità e memorie. La storia orale come metodo di ricerca e di didattica* (La Rivista di Engramma 2025). As part of the PRIN 2022 project *Theatre Festivals Between Local and Global*, she has been involved in the Rome Tor Vergata research unit, where she served as a member of the organizing committee for the conference *The prism of festivals in theatre and performance studies*.

Donatella Orecchia

Full Professor of Theatre Studies at the Department of History, Cultural Heritage, Education and Society, Tor Vergata University of Rome. She is coordinator of the PhD programme in Cultural Heritage, Education and Territory.

She co-directs the *Ormete* project with Livia Cavaglieri, oversees the oral sources archive portal for the performing arts *Patrimonio orale*, and directs the Interuniversity Research Centre for the Memory of the Performing Arts (MAP). She is President of Consulta Universitaria di Teatro italiana.

Her main research areas include contemporary theatre theory and criticism, the history and theory of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century acting and performance, Italian experimental theatre, and oral sources for the study of theatre history. Among her publications are the monographs: *Il critico e l'attore. Silvio d'Amico e la scena italiana di inizio Novecento* (Accademia University Press 2012); *La prima Duse* (Artemide 2007); *Memorie sotterranee. Storia e racconti della Borsa di Arlecchino e del Beat 72* (with L. Cavaglieri. Accademia University Press 2017); and *Stravedere la scena. Carlo Quartucci. Viaggio nei primi venti anni* (Mimesis 2020), in which oral sources play a central role.

In the context of the project *Theatre Festivals Between Local and Global*, she is the Principal Investigator.

Armando Petrini

External member of the Rome Unit of the PRIN project, is Full Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Turin, where he teaches Theatre History and Acting Techniques. His research has focused primarily on the history of the actor, with particular attention to nineteenth- and twentieth-century theatre. He has investigated the phenomenon of the Grande Attore – specifically Gustavo Modena, Giacinta Pezzana, and Giovanni Emanuel – and the evolution of theatre during the First World War, addressing both organizational aspects and transformations in artistic forms.

He has also devoted significant attention to Italian experimental theatre of the late Twentieth century, conducting in-depth studies on the works of Carmelo Bene, Carlo Quartucci, Carlo Cecchi, and Rino Sudano. Moreover, he has pursued a specific interest in the history and phenomenology of the cultural industry, critically re-examining and interweaving the approaches of Adorno, Debord, and Pasolini.

Among his publications: A. Petrini, *Gustavo Modena. Teatro, arte, politica*, ETS, 2012; A. Petrini, *Fuori dai cardini. Il teatro italiano negli anni del primo conflitto mondiale*, UTET, 2020; A. Petrini, *Carmelo Bene*, Carocci, 2021.

Rodolfo Sacchetti

Research Fellow for the PRIN project *Theatre Festivals between Local and Global*, has published four volumes on the history of radio drama (the most recent, with Carocci, *Storie da ascoltare nell'Italia del boom. Il radiodramma da Primo Levi a Giorgio Manganelli*, 2023) and the study *Il teatro dentro la storia. Opere e voci dalle Torri Gemelle alla pandemia* (Anthology Digital Publishing, 2023).

Having obtained the Italian National Scientific Qualification as Associate Professor both in “Theatre” and in “Contemporary Italian Literature,” he teaches *Modern and Contemporary Italian Literature* at the University of Florence, *Theatre History* at Middlebury College, and *Music, Media, and Technology* at the Conservatory of Bologna.

He worked at the Santarcangelo Festival, first in critical-organizational coordination (2009–2011) and then as Artistic Co-Director (2012–2014). He served as President of the Associazione Teatrale Pistoiese (2012–2018). He curated two extensive series (50 episodes) for Radio3’s *Il teatro* dedicated to radio drama and is a regular contributor to the Radio 3 Rai program *Wikiradio*. A long-standing theatre critic for the journals *Lo straniero* (2001–2017) and *Gli Asini*, he is among the founders of the group *Altre Velocità*, collaborates with *Hystrio*, *doppiozero*, and *Snaporaz*, and is one of the editors of *La Falena. Rivista di critica e cultura teatrale*. Since 2004, he has hosted a regular theatre program on *Rete Toscana Classica*.

University of Parma Unit

Francesca Bortoletti

Associate Professor of Theatre History at the University of Parma, where she directs the Centro per le Attività e le Professioni delle Arti e dello Spettacolo (CAPAS-UNIPR). She is also an affiliated scholar at the Center for Early Modern History at the University of Minnesota and serves on the scientific advisory board of the Interuniversity Research Centre for the Memory of the Performing Arts (MAP).

She is on the editorial boards of the academic journals *Ricerche di S/Confine*, *Frontiers in Digital Humanities*, and *Cultural Heritage*. Her research explores the intersection of performance, politics, and memory in Renaissance festivals and early modern theatre, with a particular focus on classical reception in both historical and contemporary performance. She is currently Principal Investigator of the W.I.D.E.- and BIP-funded “Memory and Performance” project (2022–2024), and Co-Principal Investigator of the “Aristophanes in the East End” project (UCL). She is also Co-PI of the “MUTHEA” project on eighteenth-century performative festivals in Parma. Her digital project, “FRIDA – Festivals in Renaissance Italy: A Digital Atlas”, explores the performative culture of early modern festivals. Her publications include *I mestieri di Orfeo* (2021), *La memoria della performance* (2018), and the edited volumes *Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals* (Skenè, 2024–2025) and *Aristofane nel caos del presente (Stratagemmi, 2025)*. As part of the PRIN 2022 project “Theatre Festivals between Local and Global”, she is a member of the Parma Unit.

Roberta Gandolfi

PhD in Theatre Studies, she is Associate Professor at the University of Parma, DUSIC Department, and member of the board of CIRS, the Interdepartmental Center for Social

Research; CAPAS, the University Center for Artistic Professions; and MAP, the Interuniversity Center for the Memory of the Performing Arts.

She seats in the scientific committee of ORMETE project (Orality, Memory, Theatre) and of the on-line periodical "Ricerche di S/confine". Her main areas of research are the history of theatre direction and twentieth century and contemporary performative practices, particularly political theatre, women's theatres, and amateur theatres.

She is the author of *La prima regista. Edith Craig, fra rivoluzioni della scena e culture delle donne* (2003); *Un teatro attraversato dal mondo: il Théâtre du Soleil, oggi* (with Silvia Bottioli, 2012), *Un'istruttoria lunga più di 30 anni: olocausto, memoria, performance al Teatro Due di Parma* (2016) and the editor of *I teatri universitari nei territori del sociale. Storie, azioni, progetti* (with Livia Cavaglieri, 2021) e *Desdemona in città. Quando un teatro universitario scende in strada con voce di Lei* (with Stefania Babboni, 2025).

In the context of the project *Theatre Festivals Between Local and Global*, she is the Associated Investigator.

Giulia Govi Cavani

Member of the Parma unit of the PRIN 2022 research project *Theatre Festivals between Local and Global*, she is a PhD candidate at the University of Parma, where she conducts research on the International University Theatre Festival of Parma (FITU), studied through archival and oral sources.

She is the curator of a [virtual exhibition dedicated to the FITU](#) and co-curator, together with Roberta Gandolfi, of the [series of interviews on the festival](#), available on [ORMETE's Patrimonio Orale platform](#).

As an expert consultant, she edited the appendices of the volume *Taroni-Cividin: Performance, Video, Expanded Cinema (1977–1984)*, edited by Jennifer Malvezzi and Flora Pitrolo (Silvana Editoriale, 2023).

Recently (Venice, 8–10 September 2025), she took part in the conference *Amateur Acts. Why Amateur Theatre Matters*, organized by the ERC-funded research project *Performing Citizenship*, presenting a paper entitled *Bridging Professional and Amateur through University Theatre: a Grotesque and Cross-dressed Ubu Roi Touring Europe in 1964*.

Her essay *Parma's FITU and Zadar and Zagreb's IFSK: Intersections and Dialogue between Two International Student Theatre Festivals* will be published in 2026 in the *Visioni Teatrali* series (Edizioni di Pagina).

Tommaso Zaccheo

Collaborated with the PRIN 2022 *Theatre Festivals between Local and Global* research group as a postdoctoral fellow at Parma University. He is the author of *Roger Planchon et ses théâtres (1949-1987). Enquête sur un metteur en scene, directeur et auteur de théâtre*, published in July 2025 and based on a doctoral thesis defended at the "Université Sorbonne Nouvelle" under the tutorship of Marco Consolini.

He has collaborated with the ANR ECHO - *Écrire l'Histoire de l'Oral* (*Writing the History of Orality*), he is a former associate researcher and guest researcher at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), he has published in several scientific journals or collective publications and worked as a temporary teaching and research assistant at the Institut d'Études Théâtrales (IET) at the “Sorbonne Nouvelle” and as a lecturer at the “Université de Caen-Normandie”.

He is currently an associate member of the “Institut de Recherche en Études Théâtrales” (IRET), a lecturer at the “Sorbonne Nouvelle” and responsible for artistic and cultural activities at the Théâtre de la Cité internationale (TCi) in Paris.