

Call for Contributions
(Papers, Emerging Scholars, and Performative Lectures)

EASTAP Annual Conference 2024 **Ecosystems of Theatre and Performance**

(28 October – 2 November 2024)

Deadline: 28 February 2024

We are delighted to announce the EASTAP Annual Conference 2024, hosted by the Institute of the Arts Barcelona (Sitges, Spain), under the theme “Ecosystems of Theatre and Performance”. As host city, Sitges has been a biosphere destination since 2016, and is committed to environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

The conference aims to bring together international scholars, practitioners, and researchers, inviting submissions for papers and presentations that delve into various aspects of this theme and offer fresh insights into the dynamic field of theatre and performance.

We aim to make productive the terminological shift of the concept of ‘ecology’ to ‘ecosystems’ within the realm of theatre and performance. “Ecosystems of Theatre and Performance” invites proposals that explore the scientific-environmental, figurative, and economical dimensions of these dynamic artistic systems.

As defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica, an “ecosystem” encompasses “the complex of living organisms, their physical environment, and all their interrelationships in a particular unit of space”. Similarly, the Larousse dictionary identifies three distinct meanings of “ecosystem”: 1. Système formé par un environnement (biotope) et par l’ensemble des espèces (biocénose) qui y vivent, s’y nourrissent et s’y reproduisent; 2. Figuré. Milieu (professionnel, social, etc.) dans lequel évolue quelqu’un; 3. Economie. Organisation structurée (d’un secteur d’activité par exemple) dans laquelle les différents acteurs (entreprises, fournisseurs, institutions, etc.) sont reliés par un maillage fort leur permettant d’interagir efficacement. [1. System formed by an environment (biotope) and by the ensemble of species (biocenosis) that live, feed, and reproduce in it; 2. Figuratively. Environment (professional, social, etc.) in which someone operates; 3. Economy. Structured organization (of a sector of activity, for example) in which various actors (companies, suppliers, institutions, etc.) are connected by a strong network that allows them to interact efficiently].

The concept of “ecosystems” has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary humanities discourses, drawing inspiration from pioneer thinkers such as Gregory Bateson, Felix Guattari, Arne Næss, Erich Hoerl, and then into the broader framework of New Materialism. In this interdisciplinary approach, scholars explore the interconnectedness and dynamic relationships within various cultural, social, and ecological systems. Bateson’s ecological perspective (1972 and 1979) emphasizes the interconnected nature of all living things and their environments, urging a holistic understanding that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. Guattari (1992) – following Næss (1973) – extends this notion to the socio-political realm, using the term “ecosophy” to explore the interplay between human subjectivity, society,

and the environment. Lately, in the perspective of a “New Ecological Paradigm” (2017), Hoerl’s work delves into the temporal dimensions of ecosystems, highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of relationships over time. This temporal sensitivity adds a nuanced layer to the study of interconnected systems in humanities discourse. Finally, New Materialism, as a broader movement, challenges traditional dualisms and explores the agency of non-human entities. This perspective encourages scholars to rethink the boundaries between the human and non-human, considering the material and ecological dimensions of culture, knowledge, and society.

In the field of theatre and performing arts, particular emphasis has been placed on the term “ecology”, which covers only one specific aspect of the broader concept of an “ecosystem”. For instance, Baz Kershaw, in his seminal work *Theatre Ecology* (2007), utilises “ecology” as both metaphor and theoretical model, exploring the intricate relationships among theatre, contemporary media, protest, and society. Kershaw contends that theatre possesses an “ecology”, threatened by the shift to a performative society, and its survival depends on adaptation to a transformed environment. The metaphor of “ecology” is sustained throughout the text, addressing ecological issues, and extending into the performative aspects of contemporary culture. In 1996, Bonnie Marranca already adopted a similar strategy by employing “ecology” as a comprehensive method for performative analysis, although Una Chaudhuri (2002 and 2014) cautioned that theatre often prioritises the metaphorical at the expense of the tangible, resulting in the material aspects becoming overshadowed within the spectacle. In contrast to the idea of ecological theatre, Deirdre Heddon (2012) and Carl Lavery (2015 and 2018) have investigated a theatrical approach to ecology and the relationship between environmentalism and performance, respectively, unveiling dimensions often overlooked. Moreover, Kershaw again proposes an eco-historiography for theatre and performance, advocating for an exploration of theatre economics and its other narratives not solely through traditional documentation but also via a global archive encompassing both human and electronic non-documentary sources.

From a practical standpoint, concepts such as “ecodramaturgy” are introduced, in relation to the concept of “ecocriticism” as pointed by Fiona Stafford (2016), as one of the many possible routes of research, analysis and investigation. Ecocriticism, evolving since the 1990s, reconsiders literature by examining its relationship with the environment and ecology, prompting a renewed perspective on canonical texts that views nature independently of its connection to humans. This method extends beyond theatrical content to encompass the material conditions surrounding theatrical productions. For instance, director Katie Mitchell describes her journey in creating theatre that addresses the climate crisis, through her collaboration with scientist Stephen Emmott and projects such as her reinterpretation of Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* (2013-2014) from the perspective of a tree. Mitchell often discusses the concept of ecodramaturgy, reflecting on her journey into ecodramaturgy, emphasising its transformative impact on her approach to theatre and its potential for meaningful engagement with ecological issues. In some of Mitchell’s key experiences, such as the directing of the play *Atmen/Lungs* (2013) by Duncan Macmillan, actors powered the performance using stationary bicycles, symbolically connecting the play’s content about climate change with sustainable production methods. She also delves into collaborations with scientists, like Chris Rapley, in the production of Macmillan’s *2071* (2014), aiming to inform audiences about climate science and inspire action. Revisiting classical plays, Mitchell discusses adapting Samuel Beckett’s *Happy Days* (2015) to address contemporary environmental anxieties, changing the setting to a flooded kitchen. Despite moments of despair and a hiatus from ecodramaturgy, Mitchell returns with projects like *Houses Slide* (2021), a bike-powered concert exploring ecopsychology. In 2020, amidst the pandemic, Mitchell directs bike-powered productions, including *A Play for the Living at a Time of Extinction* and *Not the End of the World*, both exploring the intersections of ecology, feminism, and race.

This example of practice reflects on the creative possibilities emerging from the constraints of integrating content, form, and sustainable production. The shift toward sustainability can be seen not as a reduction but as an expansion of theatrical possibilities, adopting an “existential creativity” as crucial for the future of theatre.

Shifting from the perspective of “ecology” to “ecosystems” and addressing the three meanings of the term (scientific-environmental, artistic/figurative, and economical), possible conference topics include but are not limited to:

Scientific-environmental

- Ecology of Theatre and Performance
- Ecotheatre, ecodramaturgy and eperformance;
- Ecoscenography, theatre and the green deal;
- Ecology in plays, talking about ecology through theatre and performance;
- Creative processes and practices related to the environment, sustainability, and climate change.

Artistic/Figurative

- Creative practices as acts of resistance, recognition, and regeneration;
- Creative processes and practices focused on diversity and inclusion in the arts;
- Creative practices in formal and informal spaces (e.g. conventional spaces, site-specific, site-responsive, alternative spaces);
- Innovative performing arts practices that challenge the existing performing art norms;
- Artist-led initiatives, responses, and strategies that address significant societal issues.

Economical-social

- Sustainability and performing arts;
- Innovative business model in the field of theatre and performance, as well as production processes focused on social justice, equity, and diversity, challenging the existing norms and question the status quo;
- Artistic activism for social, economical and environmental change as well as in creating community;
- Digitalisation as a facilitator for creative participation in a hybrid world;
- Political-repressive dimension faced by theatre and performance, and the endangerment and eradication of artistic freedom.

We encourage interdisciplinary approaches spanning theatre, performance studies, cultural studies, sociology, education, technology, philosophy, comparative studies, natural and physical science, and more. This conference aims to facilitate meaningful discussions, knowledge exchange, and collaborations among diverse participants.

EASTAP EMERGING SCHOLARS FORUM 2023

The Emerging Scholars Forum gives early career researchers an opportunity to present their research in a supportive environment with room for debate and feedback. It is also a community for networking with other emerging scholars and will include a social event. Papers for the ESF can follow the call theme of “Ecosystems of Theatre and Performance” or present a topic from the scholar’s own ongoing research. Each participating scholar will have max. 15 minutes to present their paper to allow more time for discussion and feedback. We also welcome proposals in the form of 40-minute performative lecture. We recommend that you focus your paper on a specific issue or problematic you would like to discuss, instead of presenting the general scope of your research. Keep contextualisation short and focus on specific cases, theories, methodologies and/or concepts and the questions which you would like to raise in relation to these.

If you wish to participate in the Emerging Scholars Forum, please submit as indicated below, stating clearly in the headline or the header that your paper is proposed for the Emerging Scholars Forum.

Convenors of the Emerging Scholars Forum: Julia Tonsberg, Aarhus University, Alice Golisano, University of Warwick

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME IN THE FORM OF:

- Paper (15 minutes max);
- Performative Lectures (25 minutes – section for practice-led research contributions conducted by artist-researchers and practitioners – performative lectures must have a practical component – audience can be observers or participants).

IMPORTANT DATES:

- Abstract submission deadline: 28 February 2024 (at 23.59)
- Notification of acceptance: 28 March 2024
- Registration deadline for presenters: 20 April 2024
- Conference dates: 28 October – 2 November 2024
- Fee: 130 Euros (70 Euros - Emerging Scholars only)

The fee will include: access to the special screening event of the Choreoscope Festival, specially arranged for EASTAP 2024; catering for the Opening and Closing events; coffee breaks; a corporate ticket agreement for partner venues, theatres, and/or festivals; access to the Museums of Sitges; and corporate aid for local transport in Sitges area.

Payment and registration will be through Entradium. Details will be given to accepted applicants via email.

NOTE: All proposers, conference contributors and conference attendants must be current members of the EASTAP European Association for the Study of Theatre and Performance with an active, paid subscription. Annual regular membership fee is 80 EUR and 40 EUR for PhD students. Membership Information can be found at <https://eastap.com/registration/>

SUBMISSION AND OTHER RELEVANT DEADLINES:

Abstracts should be no more than 300 words.

Please include:

- a title;
- keywords (up to 6);
- indication if the submission is for a paper OR a performative lecture;
- indication of your role (Academic scholar OR practitioner / artist);
- affiliation;
- indication of the selected fields;
- equipment required for the paper presentation OR the performative lecture;
- language of the paper presentation OR the performative lecture;
- a short bio (100 words) for all authors.

Submit your proposal as a Word document or PDF to eastap2024@iabarcelona.es by the above-mentioned deadline. Accepted languages are: English, French, Spanish and Catalan.

For inquiries or further information, please contact Armando Rotondi and Valentina Temussi (coordinators of the conference) at eastap2024@iabarcelona.es or visit our website at www.iabarcelona.com/eastap2024. CFP will be also posted on EASTAP website.

INDICATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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