European Journal of Theatre and Performance (EJTP)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Behind the Scenes: Higher Education and Pedagogy in Dance, Theatre, and Performance across Europe

Guest editors:
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(proposal deadline: 1 December 2026)

Higher Education occupies a crucial yet often overlooked position in the ecosystem of professionalised contemporary dance, theatre, and performance. Beyond technical and creative skills, it is in art schools, conservatoires, academies, universities, and other types of training institutions that artists learn the histories and philosophies of their art forms, engage with pedagogies of practice and theory, and develop capacities for collaboration and leadership. However, how institutions convey particular understandings of the body, authorship, discipline, or professional conduct to future artists, and which aesthetic values or traditions are prioritised in embodied, theoretical, and practical knowledges in the performing arts, remain insufficiently scrutinised in research.

This special issue invites behind-the-scenes investigations into these dimensions of Higher Education. What is the 'backstage' of an educational institution or pedagogical practice? What are the methods, assumptions, values, relationships, infrastructures, and power relations that underpin pedagogical encounters? How are equality and equity norms around gender, class, ability, or racialisation visible in what is regarded as pertinent, novel, or interesting enough to be included in curricula and syllabi? What exactly takes place in an audition process, a technique class, a studio rehearsal, a feedback session, a staff meeting, an assessment process, or at graduation? These aspects may appear peripheral to professional artistic practice, but Higher Education is an important gatekeeper for the field. Therefore, it is crucial to ask what kinds of artistic practices are legitimised, and what kinds of bodies, identities, behaviours, and knowledges are valued or transmitted in education? Decisions about student selection, curriculum design, syllabi, and assessment procedures shape who is able to enter the profession, whose artistic work is recognised, and who may become a role-model for future generations.

While specific pedagogical approaches have received considerable scholarly attention, this issue shifts the emphasis towards the foundations of Higher Education in dance, theatre, and performance: institutional conditions, power relations, organisational cultures, and historical structures through which pedagogies and values are decided upon. Recent scholarship has begun to explore these underlying dimensions from a range of perspectives, including student-centred learning, care-oriented pedagogies, practices of leadership, implicit norms, and learning beyond the formal curriculum (e.g. Longley and Kensington-Miller 2020; Husby and Reppen 2025; Marinus and Van Assche 2025; Husby 2026; Rothmund 2026). Particular attention has been given to matters of inclusion, representation, and decolonial approaches (e.g. Daly 2022; Stamatiou 2022; McCarthy-Brown and Schupp 2023; Barr and Oliver 2025). Other studies have also examined the relationship between institutions and creative industries as future employers, the development of students as critically reflective and theoretically informed practitioners, as well as the methodological and ethical dimensions of the classroom as a situated cultural site (e.g. Leijen et al. 2008; Dryburgh 2022; McNamara 2022). While these studies offer important conceptual and methodological tools, much of this work emerges from Anglophone contexts, whereas the institutional histories, educational systems, and policy frameworks of Higher Education vary considerably within Europe, especially across diverse languages. We seek to address this epistemic imbalance in international scholarship by bringing into dialogue research on professional dance, theatre, and performance education published in languages other than English (e.g. Schellow 2021; Germain-Thomas and Vellet 2022; Casale 2023; Christe 2023).

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- **Institutional transformations**, including the effects of the Bologna Process and the academisation of arts education, the emergence of artistic research, changing expectations regarding faculty qualifications, and the growing emphasis on internationalisation and graduate employability as well as the implications of artificial intelligence for training and assessment, and broader questions about the purposes of higher arts education and whom the arts serve (see esp. Camilleri 2026). Contributions may consist of research **across institutions, countries and disciplines** that traces the historical development of educational structures and values, or examines how national systems, institutional traditions, and policy frameworks shape contemporary practices. Comparative approaches may also illuminate differences that remain implicit within particular educational contexts.
- The ways in which ideas of artistic excellence, virtuosity, professionalism and the performing body are established and transmitted through educational practices. Contributions may examine how **aesthetic values and pedagogical traditions** become embedded in curricula, syllabi, auditions, and assessment, and how they are reproduced or challenged as ideas about artistic value evolve. Other approaches may address the **formal and informal processes** through which students and practitioners are selected, supported, assessed, and recognised and the ways these processes shape pedagogical practices and students' and faculty members' experiences.
- The **norms and expectations that govern behaviour** within educational environments, including relationships of authority, care, and discipline as well as experiences of

conflict, transgression, or misconduct and the ways institutions **negotiate inclusion, diversity, equality, accessibility, and belonging**. Relevant perspectives include disability, class, race, gender, language, migration, nationality, and citizenship, particularly in relation to the historical assumptions, institutional practices, and artistic conventions that shape access to education and recognition within the field. Contributions may consider how harmful or contested practices are addressed, normalised, or silenced and how institutional cultures shape what can be questioned or changed.

- The **encounter between artistic, pedagogical, and professional expertise** when dancers, choreographers, actors, directors, and other practitioners teach or lead classes and projects. Relevant issues include the relationship between professional experience and teaching qualifications, the authority of guest artists, and the ways expectations of professional conduct and artistic practice are negotiated in educational settings. Contributions may also include **artistic and practitioner reflections** on how education and professional training are remembered, reproduced, questioned, or transformed through artistic practice as well as performance analyses, artist essays, and reflections on pedagogical projects outside formal higher arts education that extend, intersect with, or challenge institutional models of training.
- **Ethnographic, interview-based approaches** that connect everyday educational practices to broader institutional, historical, and political conditions. Contributions may also reflect on the ethical challenges of researching and publishing institutional practices, including anonymity, confidentiality, positionality, and the potential consequences of publication in small, closely connected professional fields.

Ultimately, this special issue wants to explore how attending to these behind-the-scenes dimensions might help us rethink what Higher Education in dance, theatre, and performance is, what its values are, and what it could become? By bringing institutional practices, histories, assumptions, and power relations into view, we hope to open up new ways of thinking about how artistic intelligence is produced, transmitted, and legitimised and how educational institutions might (need to) be reimagined. We thus invite contributions that not only critically examine existing structures and traditions, but also explore possibilities for alternative futures in dance, theatre, and performance education.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

- Proposals should be written in UK English, in MS Word format, and range between 500 and 700 words. Please include a brief bio (max. 100 words).
- Send proposals by email to the guest editors (see contacts below) by **1 December 2026**.
- Proposals must be based on original, unpublished work not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- Please specify in which language the article will be submitted. EJTP accepts articles written in the language of the author's preference. However, authors writing in languages other than English must secure professional proofreading.
- If your proposal is accepted, you will be invited to submit a first draft of your article by **1 March 2026**. The maximum length of the final article should not exceed 9.000 words

(including abstract in English and in at least one additional language, references, author bio, etc.). Submitted articles will undergo double-blind peer review by two anonymous experts.

- Prospective authors should make sure their submitted articles are in accordance with the EJTP Author Guidelines, which can be consulted here: https://ejtp.eu/about/submissions.
- For more information on the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance,* please visit: https://ejtp.eu/about.

SCHEDULE

- Proposals: 1 December 2026 (note of acceptance by 15 December 2026)
- First drafts: 1 March 2026
- Peer review outcome: 1 April 2026
- Second drafts: 1 May 2026
- Final Manuscripts: 1 June 2026
- Publication: End of September 2026

CONTACTS

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