



European Journal of Theatre and Performance (EJTP)

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### ***Mobilising Heritage: Dance, Theatre, and Performance in the Age of (In)Tangibility***

Guest editors:

**Timmy De Laet, Franz Anton Cramer, Vicky Kämpfe, and Dunja Njaradi**

(proposal deadline: 25 January 2026)



Fumiyo Ikeda and Misha Demoustier rehearsing for *The Wave* by Zoë Demoustier © Lore Stessel

The past two decades have witnessed a profound shift in global heritage discourse. Since the adoption of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), the idea of living heritage has expanded beyond monuments and artefacts to encompass practices, skills, and expressions rooted in communities. This turn toward the intangible and communal dimensions of heritage, however, also exposed deep tensions between preservation and change, expert authority and bottom-up participation, or institutional policies and bodily practices. These frictions are particularly visible in dance and the performing arts, where heritage is literally embodied, enacted, and reimagined through practice. Once treated as fleeting and immaterial, dance, theatre, and performance now stand at the centre of heritage debates. In what this special issue terms the age of (in)tangibility, the performing arts are recognised as intangible heritage precisely as they are rendered tangible through documentation, digitisation, and policy frameworks, revealing a constitutive tension between embodied, relational knowledge that exists only in practice and the material, institutional forms through which heritage is named, governed, and sustained.

In various cultural contexts, artists and communities are increasingly engaging with heritage in inventive ways: from reconstructing lost choreographies to reviving local social dances, reinterpreting indigenous and diasporic practices for new audiences, or mobilising historical forms for contemporary political struggles. These bottom-up initiatives coincide with a growing institutional recognition of dance as heritage, as exemplified by the inclusion of Modern Dance in Germany on UNESCO's ICH list in 2022. Such developments trouble longstanding distinctions between 'traditional' and 'artistic' dance (Kwan 2017; Rašić et al. 2024), while also exposing the complex interplay between policy regulations, cultural value, creative innovation, and communal ownership.

For its next special 'Essays section' devoted to the theme of dance and performing arts heritage, the *European Journal of Theatre and Performance* (EJTP) invites scholars, artists, practitioners, and policymakers to interrogate how dance, theatre, and performance has become a testing ground for the contradictions and possibilities of heritage in the twenty-first century (Dekker and Giannachi 2023). How can a living, embodied, and inherently evolving practices as dance, theatre, and performance enter into processes of heritagisation and be 'safeguarded'? Who determines what is worth preserving, and how do such decisions ascribe value to certain bodies, oeuvres, or legacies while excluding others (Eichler 2021)? How are cultural policies, institutional frameworks, practitioner communities, and digital technologies redefining the boundaries of what counts as heritage, and who has the authority to define and transmit it (Wulf 2024)?

Within heritage studies, scholars have long critiqued what Laurajane Smith has termed the 'Authorized Heritage Discourse' (2006), highlighting how heritagisation processes are steered by expert authority and institutional regulation to bestow symbolic and economic value on cultural forms (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Petkovski 2024). Recent debates on ICH further emphasised the performative nature of safeguarding and how it constructs – rather than merely preserves – cultural meaning (Bendix 2009; Hafstein 2009; Haldrup and Boerenholdt 2015). In the case of dance and the performing arts, heritagisation

often tends to prioritise continuity over innovation (Bakka and Karoblis 2021; Carr 2023), transforming dynamic practices into what Zoi Margari (2016) calls ‘intangible monuments’ that risk immobilising creative evolution in the name of safeguarding.

Research in dance, theatre, and performance studies has since some years increasingly addressed questions of heritage, primarily focusing on the role of communities, the tension between preservation and innovation, and the transmission of embodied knowledges (Forment and Stalpaert 2015; Whatley 2022; Bakka and Karoblis 2021; Njaradi 2025; De Laet 2026). Scholars such as Diana Taylor (2003), Mark Franko (2017), and Vicky Kämpfe (2023) have shown how movement and corporeal experience function as sites of epistemic production, while the rise of artistic research and practice-oriented methodologies (Arlander et al. 2018) underscore how performance itself constitutes a form of knowing. The acknowledgement that the body can serve as a repository of cultural memory (Assmann 2024) not only troubles the tangible/intangible divide pertinent to ICH discourses, but also challenges the archival and classificatory logics that underpin institutionalised modes of preservation (Blades et al. 2017; De Laet 2020; Cramer 2010). Additionally, while the rapid expansion of digital technologies and motion databases expand the possibilities for transmitting and accessing dance heritage, they also pose new risks of disembodiment, data obsolescence, and ecological impact (Bench and Elswit 2022; Baillot 2023; Mcdermott and Craith 2025).

In turbulent times marked by political upheaval, climate and refugee crises, increasing militarisation, and resurgent nationalisms, cultural heritage frequently figures as a symbol of national identity, historical continuity, and human excellence (Grau and Gore 2014; Bigenho and Stobart 2016; Felföldi 2018; Rakočević 2020; Fouseki 2021). The conservatist connotations clinging to the notion of heritage also explain why the arts field is sometimes reluctant to embrace the term, even when the most innovative practices acknowledge their indebtedness to history and precursors. More than ever, it becomes urgent to address the imbrication of heritage and politics.

To reflect the heterogenous nature of dance, theatre, and performance heritage, this special issue welcomes contributions in three complementary formats:

(1) **Practitioner testimonies** invite reflective contributions from artists, choreographers, dancers, heritage workers, archivists, or others who engage with heritage through practice. These texts may articulate how heritage is understood, mobilised, or contested in concrete contexts, and how embodied, experiential, and practice-based knowledges contribute to keeping dance and performance heritage alive.

(2) **Scholarly essays** invite more academic-oriented contributions that critically inquire into the dynamics of dance and performing arts heritage from disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives, including dance, theatre, and performance studies, historical research, ethnography, digital humanities, and heritage studies. These essays may address conceptual, historical, methodological, or empirical questions raised in this call, such as heritagisation processes, transmission and embodiment, value regimes, institutional power,

digital mediation, or decolonial and transnational perspectives. We particularly welcome contributions that bridge theory and practice, challenge established epistemic hierarchies or propose new analytical frameworks for understanding dance and performance as living heritage.

(3) **Policy papers** invite contributions from professionals working at the interface of heritage and governance, including those involved in cultural policy-making, heritage administration, international organisations, and funding bodies at local, national, European, or global levels. These contributions may reflect on the development, implementation, and effects of heritage policies in relation to dance and the performing arts, as well as on the frictions between policy frameworks and lived practices. We especially encourage forward-looking papers that critically assess existing safeguarding models and propose alternative approaches that better account for the processual, embodied, and community-based nature of dance and performing arts heritage.

By bringing these formats together, the special issue seeks to bridge theory, practice, and policy, and to illuminate how dance and performing arts heritage is continuously made – and remade – through movement, negotiation, and collective action.

## 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 **25 January 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 **15 April 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: 25 January 2026 (note of acceptance by 5 February 2026)
- First drafts: 15 April 2026
- Second drafts: 20 May 2026
- Peer review outcome: 25 June 2026
- Final Drafts: 15 August 2026
- Publication: End of September 2026

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