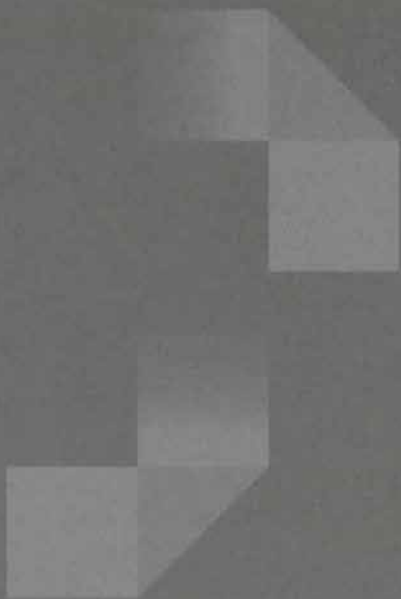


Sharing is Caring: Our 1st Performing Arts' Conservation and Dissemination Symposium

Laura Ars

*Museu de les Arts Escèniques of the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona
(Spain)*



Due to performance's ephemeral character, experts in its heritage, conservation, and dissemination face unique challenges that cannot be solved with traditional museology and museography methods. Despite being a widely discussed topic,¹ performance conservation still needs to expand its theoretical framework and research. Particularly, we noticed a lack of information, analysis, and discussion within our culture, language, and idiosyncrasies.

Therefore, as the Museu de les Arts Escèniques (Performing Arts Museum) in Catalonia (Spain), we decided to organize a symposium for reflection and dialogue between our performance creators, curators, archivists, and exhibition experts — hosted at the Institut del Teatre (Theatre Institute) of Barcelona on November 8, 2023.² The symposium consisted of an inaugural conference and three panels that aimed to address questions posed by the author of this document. The questions can be summarized as follows: what and why we conserve, how we conserve it, and how we make it accessible. We sincerely thank the symposium participants for their inspiring and stimulating contributions.

■ Fig. 1 The Museu de les Arts Escèniques (Performing Arts Museum) storerooms

This paper aims to translate and review the key ideas, thoughts, and reflections of our heritage centers, professionals, and creators on the conservation of performing arts.³ The goal is to contribute to the global discussion on the care, preservation, and promotion of performing arts memory.

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- 1 We are indebted to both theorists and performing artists for their valuable contributions in this regard. The symposium was conceptually organized with the help of texts written by Ignacio de Antonio Antón, Phillip Auslander, Ana Teresa Cancela Pires, Paula Fernández Valdés and Salomé Cuesta Varela, Marta Filipa de Costa Rodrigues, Lisbet Grandjean, Peggy Phelan, Rebecca Schneider, and Jonah Westerman, among others.
 - 2 The symposium's entire program and information can be accessed in Catalan using the following link: <https://www.cdmae.cat/i-jornada-de-conservacio-i-divulgacio-darts-en-viu/>
 - 3 The Museu de les Arts Escèniques published online the official memoirs of the event in March 2024, to which this document is indebted. The memoirs are available in Catalan using the following link: <https://redit.institutdelteatre.cat/handle/20.500.11904/1544>



■ Fig. 1

Opening lecture. *Mention/Knowledge/Care*⁴

Dancers and choreographers Pep Ramis and María Muñoz were selected for the inaugural conference due to their extensive background, which has led them to develop a personal and clear vision of concepts such as memory, archive, and transmission. They established the dance company Mal Pelo in 1989 and are still actively working. From the beginning, the group has based their work on constant research into new languages and expressions. In 2001, they set up *L'animal a l'esquena* (The Animal On The Back), a center for creation and multidisciplinary exchange in a 19-hectare farmhouse: a refuge that encourages experimentation and the exchange of ideas and experiences in residencies, workshops, and laboratories.

Regarding the preservation of performing arts, the couple recognizes the inevitability of loss and the constant emergence of new ideas. Aware of the contradiction of wanting to transmit ephemeral arts while knowing that the potential of performance lies precisely in momentary existence, they emphasize the referents' importance in configuring a collective imagination and cosmos. For this reason, although they understand the impossible nature of reproduction, they accept and celebrate the fiction—the translation, the transmission—that exists in every reactivation of performing arts.

To this end, they ask themselves what should be kept in our archives: “What beautiful attempts at transmission can we develop so that our experiences can trigger new experiences?” They learned from practice that embracing a perception of memory beyond classical heritage focuses on an archive of movement. For them, the body is the most effective tool for transmission: an archive in itself. Like the carpenter, the dancer learns by watching, imitating, and doing; the craftsman's body, like that of the artist, contains the memories of a whole generation of artisans who would not exist without the act of sharing.

■ Fig. 2 The audience listens attentively to Pep Ramis and María Muñoz.
Photography by Jesús Atienza.

4 The original title of the talk in Catalan, *Esmement*, translates to all three concepts, which the talk encompassed.



■ Fig. 2



■ Fig. 3

They have also practiced transmission in self-translation, which brings them great fun and pleasure. The experience of re-contextualizing their pieces—for example, from the stage to the exhibition hall—entails a critical distance from their own work. Among other examples, Muñoz explained the reactivation and reinterpretation of her solo *Bach* (2004) by the Italian dancer Federica Porello in 2016.⁵ The transmission process revealed to her many differences. For instance, for the four lines on the piece she had written, Porello filled two annotation notebooks. During the process, the two dancers shared the viewing of the audiovisual record, but above all, they shared conversations and worked on physical tuning, musicality, and composition. Muñoz described how an invisible thread linked their moving bodies during the performance, a connection that Porello would pass on to others in future reactivations.

Panel 1. Are we able, willing, and capable of preserving performing arts?⁶

The first panel addressed the conservation of performing arts, including its feasibility, ethical considerations, and strategies for keeping these arts alive.

The first speaker was Anabel de la Paz, head of Archive, Library, and Heritage at the Teatre Lliure (one of Spain's most important centers of creation and stage exhibition). De la Paz started by quoting Zara Rodríguez, Peggy Phelan, Richard Schechner, and Juan Carlos Olivares to make clear the common challenge shared by all professionals in the documentation of the performing arts: it is impossible to capture and reproduce the ephemeral. Hence, its documentarians face the challenge of being both creative and faithful to the nature of the artist's work. In this regard, she believes that the documentation process must begin with the creative process. All aspects of the procedure, including audience and critic reception, should be documented, along with distinct voices, such as those of machinists or producers. Documentarians must also transmit this need to the creators, who must be aware that everything they generate has the potential to become heritage.

■ Fig. 3 Jordi Alomar and Anabel de la Paz in the first panel presentation.
Photography by Jesús Atienza.

Barcelona's Museu de la Música (Music Museum) director, Jordi Alomar, confessed that he has yet to find a definitive answer to the question of how we can preserve something experiential. Nevertheless, he accepts that the only way to understand this preservation is by activating a heritage of experiences. He thus proposes to consider heritage as a starting point: a trigger to begin processes of

5 There are records for both the original piece by María Muñoz in 2004 (<https://mercatflors.cat/en/espectacle/bach-2004/>) and the reactivation by Federica Porello in 2016 (<https://mercatflors.cat/espectacle/bach-project-constellation-bach-danced-by-federica-porello/>).

6 Since we had never met before to discuss these issues, some participants hesitated about how to prepare for their contributions. Therefore, all panelists were given a presentation a month prior with a main question and three sub-questions (broken down into more questions) to guide their preparations. The presentation also featured inspirational images from our collections and relevant quotations.

“transmission, re-reading, translation, transduction, and transference”. However, to comprehend the triggering capacity of preserving performing arts, he cautions that we must detach ourselves from the modern view that understands the world from aggression: as objects that can be obtained, reached, conquered, dominated, or used.

Hence, the Museu de la Música is currently engaged in multiple projects that defend a caring approximation to performing heritage. For example, in *Fragments de l'oblit* (*Fragments of Oblivion*), the sound artist Alfredo Costa Monteiro spent over six months working with all the instruments that had been forgotten in the museum's storerooms, creating a soundscape from everything that was out of musical use.

The dancer and choreographer Núria Guiu quoted Rebecca Schneider to speak about the Western perception of the performing arts as ephemeral because they have no material remains. Because we do not understand that the immaterial is just as important. The dancer revealed that her generation had felt orphaned: disconnected from the national dance history. Like many young artists, she now seeks to recover the past through other bodies, choreographers, and choreographies, summoning their absence and preserving their remnants. On this matter, Guiu calls for performing arts archives to be more accessible and transversal, with fewer bureaucratic and digital obstacles.

Like Mal Pelo, she understands the body as an effective channel for presences and absences: “an archive of phantasmagorias”. At the time of the symposium, Guiu was working on the piece *CÈL·LULA 4: Supermedium* along with Norwegian choreographer Ingri Fiksdal. In this performance, nine dancers—including Guiu—became the channel of dances from different times and spaces. Thus, exemplifying the phantasmatic character of dance: a specific movement can be passed on from our mothers or teachers, who also learned from their mothers and teachers, and so on, ad infinitum.

The last panelist was Jesús Navarro, director of the Morera, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Lleida, who pointed out that contemporary art museums have been incorporating performing arts into their collections for some time now. He explained that despite being a globally debated topic, collecting performing arts is still a conceptually precarious subject. In this regard, he believes the curator is an essential figure as a critical agent in the art system who accompanies the artists' creative processes and enriches the context in which the work is produced. Therefore, besides documenting the creative process, the museum has the potential to influence it.

Recently, the Morera Museum acquired a performative work by dancer Aimar Pérez Galí. This purchase posed conceptual and administrative problems to the institution: “How do we buy that which does not exist, which is immaterial? What are we buying?” The museum acquired the documentation that accompanied the performance and, at the same time, agreed with the artist that the piece would be



■ Fig. 4

periodically represented in the museum's galleries —bearing in mind that because of its improvisational nature, the work would mutate over time.

■ Fig. 4 The Institut del Teatre's Auditorium was at full capacity for the symposium. Photography by Jesús Atienza.

Panel 2. What do we preserve when what we preserve does not exist?

Preserving performing arts has traditionally involved collecting documentation and objects, but there are questions about whether this approach is enough. Panelists on the second roundtable were asked: What to preserve when preserving the ephemeral? Does the institution play a new role in the preserved performance? Can immaterial art be materially preserved?

Marta Vega heads Barcelona's Contemporary Art Museum's Studies and Documentation Centre. Vega explained how at MACBA —the museum abbreviation— the archive and the collection are merged into a single artistic-documental legacy, making establishing protocols difficult. The museum then standardizes the dynamic nature of the archive through these unavoidable protocols. It decides how the archive is configured and classified, and these decisions are mediated by policies determined and implemented by the museum staff. Consequently, Vega admits that the museum is undoubtedly an actor that intervenes and affects the archive.

Regarding the conservation of material and immaterial remains, she considers material conservation an inevitable part of the work. However, she admits we should still explore the preserved works' possibilities and accept their fugacity. For example, MACBA acquired a book by Enric Farrés-Duran with no material existence: the author orally explained the work to the staff and, faced with the concern of the librarians, guaranteed that nothing would happen if the book was forgotten or progressively lost. Physical books are also susceptible to theft or damage, he assured them.



■ Fig. 5

As Jesús Navarro did, Carme Carreño highlighted the role of curators. The curator of our Performing Arts Museum emphasized the importance of giving voice to objects, constructing narratives, and providing engaging reinterpretations. To illustrate the institution's creative potential in relation to creators, she shared an anecdote: during an exhibition, the museum mistakenly arranged a design by dancer and costume designer Lydia Azzopardi, who corrected the staff but confessed to loving the new proposal. Carreño acknowledged that receiving assistance from agents familiar with the legacy is crucial to avoid such mistakes. Therefore, linking oral memory to its documentation is essential while both last.

Carreño agreed with Vega that preserving and recording the physical remains is crucial. The curator cautioned that even though the conservation world is undergoing necessary change, it is important to balance the durability of physical objects with the activation of intangible concepts.

■ Fig. 5 Performing arts creator Júlia Rúbies talks at the second panel. Photography by Jesús Atienza.

The performing arts creator Júlia Rúbies encouraged us to accept that some things will be lost in the shipwreck, and that is fine. We must learn to live with it. However, we must ask ourselves what discourses and hegemonies are reinforced by that which is preserved, that which we reproduce. According to Rúbies, when we decide what to keep and what not to keep, we create a system of visibility and invisibility, relevance and exclusion, for which we must take responsibility. This is why she strives to engage with any document or memory responsibly, creatively, and generously, not to possess but to participate.

Like Núria Guiu, the artist is part of a generation who feels orphaned and questions: "How is it possible that this has not reached me before?" Rúbies believes that many artistic processes now incorporate a documentary aspect, which each artist approaches in a specific way. In this regard, she explained the perspective on the future of the Italian philosopher Federico Campagna.⁷ Campagna proposes

7 The artist cited Campagna's latest essay, *Prophetic Culture: Recreation for adolescents* (London, Bloomsbury, 2021), in particular.



■ Fig. 6

that artists should consider themselves as generators of documentation, with the awareness that they are already ancestors of a forthcoming culture, even if they do not know what shape it will ultimately take. Rúbies thus reflects on how to project the speculative gesture towards the next generations, considering that they might not have access to the current codes and formats, much like the millennials are unfamiliar with floppy disks.

■ Fig. 6 All the panels had many contributions from the audience, from artists and researchers alike. In the image, Dance Historian and Professor Ester Vendrell poses a question to the second panel. Photography by Jesús Atienza.

Panel 3. Is it possible to exhibit artworks that have already disappeared?

The impostor syndrome comically marked the third roundtable, as we invited: Àlex Serrano, scenic creator and co-founder of Señor Serrano, a theatre company that mixes performance, video, sound, and design into contemporary stage stories related to discordant aspects of human experience; Rita Rakosnik, art historian, critic and independent curator specialized in art, literature, thought, fashion and pop culture; and Pau Garcia, director of Domestic Data Streamers, a leading design studio specialized in the collection and communication of information in new data languages. The panel aimed to go beyond established parameters in the performing arts exhibition, focusing instead on contemporary narratives and accessibility to heritage, both tangible and intangible.

Rita Rakosnik declared that she is interested in the many visions of the archive: “a space where tender and blurred things fit.” For that, she believes that we must break away from the current notions of *museum* and *archive*—characterized by the colonial, racist, and patriarchal perspective of the West. To do so, she recommends activating and exploring the archives through collective mediation, enabling the re-emergence and re-reading of heritage. Hence, Rakosnik shares with Rebecca Schneider the idea of loss as a starting point. Especially in a legacy that oscillates dangerously between presence (the ballet slipper or the theatrical text) and absence



■ Fig. 7

(gesture, voice, or movement). “If we privilege an understanding of performing arts as something that refuses to persist, we ignore other ways of knowing and remembering”, Rakosnik warns us.

The critic then quoted Heike Roms on the performativity of documentation. Roms proposes that perhaps the fundamental relationship is not between the original event and its documentation but between the document and its audience; we must perceive the document itself as a performance that directly reflects the aesthetic view or sensibility of the artist of whom we are now the audience. Rakosnik concluded: “We have a responsibility to question and challenge the hegemony of visibility and to empower new sensibilities and imaginaries.” It is thus critical to move beyond the fetishization of the showcase effect and work towards a genuine education in the humanities that permits an affective and effective activation of these oblivion fragments.

■ Fig. 7 Àlex Serrano, Pau Garcia, Rita Rakosnik and Laura Ars discussing how to exhibit performing arts memory. Photography by Jesús Atienza.

“Not everything deserves to be remembered, and we even have an obligation to forget certain things”, said Pau Garcia. He emphasized the importance of choosing what we remember and who gets to choose that, a process that is not neutral, as Vega stated before. Garcia cautions against reproducing the deficiencies of our stages by archiving in the same way we generate visibility. “We should not replicate the same retrograde logic”, or it can lead us, for example, to the underrepresentation of women scenic directors. We must communicate what is present (the archive and documentation) while also conveying the absence (what we do not see, what we lost in the shipwreck).

Domestic Data Streamers fights and rebels against the traditional conception of the exhibition and defends the museum as a porous and interactive space, one of dialogue and relation to the community it inhabits. As for reenactment, Garcia joked that its greatest exponent is the mass: a representation shared globally and repeated liturgically, through which ideologies, political perspectives, or ways of understanding the world are transmitted. On the contrary, he argued for a

reenactment of the ephemeral that does not aim to reproduce, but rather seeks to discover the forms that a piece did not have or that have yet to be explored.

Alex Serrano shared a moving family story. The only thing he requested to inherit from his father was a cinnabar, a semi-precious stone that darkens in natural light and, therefore, must be kept in complete darkness. Still, the artist occasionally shows the mineral to his children; aware that this implies the loss of the cinnabar, as well as his father's memory. "Remembering is possessing?" he asked, explaining an impulse of possession that led him to copy the entire National Dance Center of France collection onto DVDs. He admitted to losing the collection later, much like how *Las Meninas* or *La Gioconda* will someday be lost despite every effort to preserve them. Because archives and documentation are less temporary, but equally ephemeral.

Regarding reenactment, Serrano alerts us that we must think about the motivation behind each one, ask ourselves if it is necessary, and if it brings a relevant reading of the immaterial traces. In this regard, he admits that on occasion, he gets so caught up in the guided tour's performance that he forgets about the objects being exhibited and explained. He also confessed that he loves questioning museum guards because they develop a deep relationship with and understanding of the works. Thus, they learn and transmit alternate data and histories not found in official guides and narratives.

Conclusions

Anabel de la Paz expressed her gratitude to the symposium for providing her with the opportunity to take a break from her hectic routine, reflect on her practice, and share her thoughts with her colleagues. Likewise, all the attendees, including the seventy-plus individuals in the audience, some of whom actively participated in the question time of the panels, acknowledged the significance of discussing these issues from a broad perspective (with curators, experts, artists, spectators, as well as individuals from different ages, genders, and backgrounds).

Specific ideas were repeated and thus solidified in our minds. These ideas include the inevitability of loss, the importance of referents, and the need to transmit performative arts through translations, re-readings, reenactments, and/or other formats yet to be discovered. We also learned the importance of balancing between material and immaterial remains to explain an experiential practice; or the significance of documenting creative processes and the role of curators and documentarians in this regard. Finally, we must shed ourselves from outdated concepts and obsolete views to coherently decide what we conserve, who determines preservation policies, and how we take responsibility for the absences.

In the end, we agreed to meet again in November 2025 to further discuss the responsibilities and obligations of performing arts heritage institutions to our artists, society, and future generations. We look forward to working collaboratively

towards a future where the performing arts can thrive and continue to inspire generations to come.

Résumé

Étant donné les caractéristiques uniques des arts du spectacle, les experts en patrimoine, en conservation et en diffusion sont confrontés à des problèmes spécifiques qui sont difficiles à résoudre avec les méthodes traditionnelles de préservation et d'exposition de la muséologie et de la muséographie classiques. En tant que **Museu de les Arts Escèniques de Barcelone** (Catalogne, Espagne), la recherche et l'investigation dans ce domaine nous ont amenés, d'une part, à constater qu'il s'agit d'une préoccupation largement répandue parmi les institutions qui conservent les arts du spectacle et, d'autre part, qu'il y a un manque commun d'information, d'analyse et de discussion sur le sujet.

C'est ce qui nous a incités à organiser, pour la première fois en Espagne, un symposium de réflexion et de dialogue entre créateurs de spectacles, conservateurs, archivistes et experts en expositions. Une assemblée pour débattre des particularités de la conservation et de la diffusion des arts du spectacle et des droits et devoirs des institutions patrimoniales à l'égard de la société actuelle et des générations futures.

Le premier symposium sur la conservation et la diffusion des arts du spectacle a débuté par une conférence inaugurale de **Pep Ramis** et **María Muñoz** (Mal Pelo), deux chorégraphes et danseurs qui, après des années consacrées à la danse et à la création, continuent d'évoluer et de composer des productions de plus en plus ambitieuses, tout en revenant souvent à leur répertoire pour le réviser et le reformuler. "Dans la danse, le corps lui-même agit comme une archive de transmission", a révélé M. Muñoz.

Le premier forum s'est ensuite concentré sur les processus et les stratégies de préservation et de documentation de l'éphémère, avec la question suivante: "Sommes-nous en mesure, disposés et capables de préserver les arts du spectacle?" Y figuraient: **Anabel de la Paz**, responsable des archives, de la bibliothèque et du patrimoine du Teatre Lliure; **Jesús Navarro**, directeur du Morera, Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Lleida; **Jordi Alomar**, directeur du Museu de la Música de Catalogne; et la danseuse et chorégraphe **Núria Guiu**, Prix national de la culture de Catalogne en 2022.

Le deuxième forum s'est concentré sur les aspects pratiques de la conservation. **Marta Vega**, responsable du centre d'études et de documentation du MACBA, **Carme Carreño**, conservatrice du Museu de les Arts Escèniques de Barcelone, et **Júlia Rúbies**, artiste de la scène qui concentre actuellement sa création sur la mémoire orale et physique de la danse, ont répondu à la question: "Que conserve-t-on lorsque ce que l'on conserve n'existe plus?"

Enfin, le symposium s'est achevé sur la question suivante: "Est-il possible d'exposer des œuvres d'art disparues?" **Rita Rakosnik**, historienne de l'art, critique et commissaire d'exposition indépendante, **Pau Garcia**, cofondateur de Domestic Data Streamers, et **Alex Serrano**, créateur de Agrupación Señor Serrano, ont répondu avec humour, des idées originales et des références inattendues à la famille, à la mort et à l'héritage de chacun.

La conclusion unanime de l'événement a été la nécessité d'organiser un deuxième, un troisième et un quatrième symposium, un rendez-vous annuel pour approfondir les connaissances, les débats et les questions initiées lors de cette première rencontre. C'est pourquoi le partage de cette expérience avec le monde entier a pour but de mettre en valeur les pensées et les réflexions que nos centres patrimoniaux, les professionnels individuels et les créateurs de spectacles ont menées sur la conservation et la diffusion des arts du spectacle, mais aussi d'attirer l'attention sur la nécessité de s'arrêter pour réfléchir, se rencontrer et partager.

摘要

鑑於表演藝術的獨特性，遺產、保育和傳播專家面臨難以用古典博物館學和博物館誌的傳統保存和展覽方法解決的特殊問題。作為（西班牙加泰隆尼亞）**巴塞隆拿表演藝術博物館**（Museu de les Arts Escèniques de Barcelona），這領域的研究和調查讓我們意識到，一方面，這是每個保存表演藝術的機構普遍關注的問題，而另一方面，關於這個主題的資訊、分析和討論普遍不足。

於是，我們首次在西班牙舉辦了一場研討會，讓表演創作者、策展人、檔案專員和展覽專家進行反思和對話。這一場會議，讓大家辯論關於保存和傳播表演藝術的特性，以及遺產機構對當代社會和未來世代的權利和責任。

第一屆表演藝術保存與推廣研討會，以 **Pep Ramis** 和 **María Muñoz**（「Mal Pelo」藝團）的開幕會議揭開序幕。兩位舞者兼編舞家多年來致力於舞蹈和創作，不斷發展並創作愈來愈具野心的作品，同時他倆不忘經常重溫舞碼，進行修訂和重新編排。Muñoz 透露：「在舞蹈世界，身體本身就是一種傳輸檔案。」

之後，第一個論壇集中討論了保存和記錄短暫性藝術的過程和策略，並提問「我們是否可以、願意並且有能力保存表演藝術？」。參與討論的嘉賓包括：自由劇院（Teatre Lliure）檔案室圖書館和遺產部門主管 **Anabel de la Paz**、萊里達現代及當代藝術博物館（Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Lleida）館長 **Jesús Navarro**、加泰隆尼亞音樂博物館（Museu de la Música）館長 **Jordi Alomar**，以及舞者兼編舞家、2022 年加泰隆尼亞國家文化獎得主 **Núria Guiu**。

第二個論壇重點討論了保存工作的實際問題。MACBA 研究和文獻中心主管 **Marta Vega**、巴塞隆拿表演藝術博物館策展人 **Carme Carreño**，以及目前專注於舞蹈口述和身體記憶的表演藝術家 **Júlia Rúbies** 回應了「當你保存的東西不再存在時，你要保存甚麼？」這一問題。

最後，研討會以「可否展出消失的藝術品？」這問題作為結尾。藝術史學家、評論人和獨立策展人 **Rita Rakosnik**、Domestic Data Streamers 的聯合創辦人 **Pau Garcia**，以及 Agrupación Señor Serrano 的創作者 **Àlex Serrano**，以幽默、獨到的見解，並意想不到地引用家庭、死亡和個人遺產，來回應問題。

研討會的結論一致認為有需要舉行第二、三、四屆研討會，以一年一度的聚會，延續首次會議中所提出的知識、辯論和問題。因此，與全世界分享這次經驗，以強調我們的文化遺產中心、個別專業人士和表演創作者，對保存和推廣表演藝術的想法和反思，同時提醒人們需要停下來思考、相聚和分享。