

## WHAT KEEPS US GOING (AND STOPS US FERTILISING THE CONCRETE)

**Antic Teatre urgently demands an agreement to guarantee its continued function and implement the promises made by the City Council.**

Welcome, dear colleagues from the press, neighbours, representatives of artistic, political and social communities, and citizens of Barcelona.

Thank you all for being here. For bringing your physical bodies and your hearts. Because we continue to uphold that physical presence has meaning. It's necessary! It creates history. A history created within a context, that itself creates context. That which is public or for public service cannot function in silence. Our yearly press conference is a political and social act.

As our beloved **Oriol Puig Taulé** says: *"Antic Teatre's press conferences are a in a genre of their own. Assembly, party, demonstration and political meeting all at the same time".*

<https://www.nuvol.com/teatre-i-dansa/dansa/lantic-teatre-ara-i-sempre-413171>

Once again, THANK YOU for being here. It's very important! And very comforting. This is why we'll close today's event with a toast.

I, Semolina Tomic, will give a political introduction, then Olga Vaz will explain our projects for 2026, and the productions, collaborations and programme from January to July 2026. Then Esther Blázquez will speak about the role of mediation as applied to production, and Nia Paton will give you an update on our much-loved Community Arts Project.

And then, the floor will be yours!

### Where we are now

In a world where conflicts appear in multiple forms – political, social, environmental – questioning the mechanisms of resistance, commitment and struggle is becoming a matter of urgency. We cannot forget the tragedies of war while highlighting the importance of questioning the struggles that run through our societies.

The fascist trend in Europe has not happened 'all of a sudden' but has been picking up speed since the 2008 financial crisis and has become highly visible after the refugee crisis of 2015 and the social, climatic and war crises that followed. This is not a carbon copy of the classic fascism of the 30s, but a hybridisation: strong political representation for the far right, 'extraordinary' authoritarianism and a normalisation of hate at the centre of the political system. Between 2010 and 2026 the far right has gone from being a marginal force to governing or sharing government in countries such as Hungary, Poland, Italy, Finland, the Netherlands, Croatia and the Czech Republic. In 2026 the far right represents close to a quarter of the European Parliament and has become the second strongest force, breaking the old 'quarantine line'. One crisis after another: unemployment, precarity, housing,

pandemic, war and fear of the future, has been used to blame refugees, migrants and minorities instead of the economic elites.

There has been a cultural normalisation of symbols, salutes and marches referring back to historical fascism, while intellectuals and think tanks reformulate their ideology in modern terms. Media and social networks amplify hate discourse and conspiracy theories, while whitewashing symbols, mottoes and leaders with clearly neo-fascist roots. Many analysts describe the current situation in the United States as a fascist trend. The United States power machine has finally ripped off its mask. In particular under Donald Trump's second mandate, we have seen an increase in authoritarianism on the home front and an aggressive imperialism abroad. There has been a clear increase in the use of the apparatus of repression (mass deportations, national militarisation, surveillance) directed at migrants, political dissidents or social movements, while feeding a supremacist hate discourse that normalises violence.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Anti-fascist Movement of Barcelona and Catalonia for having, just a few days ago, boycotted the headquarters of a fascist and neo-Nazi group in Barcelona known as "Núcleo Nacional". Police charged the anti-fascist protesters in a bid to stop them from reaching the meeting point of the neo-Nazi group in Sentmenat, an hour's distance from the city. It is very important for us to comment on this recent event, because we are currently fighting neo-fascism. And we're asking all security forces, the (Catalan police force) Mossos d'Esquadra, to stop protecting the fascists and protect us as citizens who still believe in democracy and the welfare state.

### **And now, about Antic Teatre.**

We're in the final stretch of a political and community struggle that has been going on for over 23 years to guarantee Antic Teatre's continuance and the preservation of its location. Our project emerged from grass roots, and has been kept going by people power: the neighbourhood, the artists and a wide net of local, national and international support. Without this, we would not be here.

Antic Teatre upholds a clear and non-negotiable premise: art from resistance, art that takes risks, that is contemporary, radical and community-based. Live arts with an explicit political positioning; that is, that sees culture as a basic necessity.

Our struggle is also about defending the Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i La Ribera neighbourhood, fighting gentrification, urban speculation and a city model that excludes us. Antic is a living venue, linked to its location, and a place for cultural resistance in a Barcelona that has been severely affected by mass tourism.

As to the institutional situation, the compulsory buy-out of the building has not yet been made official. In March 2024 the buy-out was approved by the Catalan Government. In May 2025, Barcelona City Council published a communique whereby this operation would be included in the municipal budget, starting the expropriation process that is now ongoing. We understand that Antic Teatre will end up as a publicly-owned venue, with our project continuing as before and with the current staff kept on, as we have been promised in the meetings we've had. But today we are stating categorically that promises and announcements are not enough. So far, communication with Barcelona City Council regarding the

compulsory buy-out has been going well, thanks to ICUB manager Oriol Martí Sambola. Even so, we would like to express publicly our disappointment that the Councillor for Culture of Barcelona City Council, Xavier Marcé, is not present at this press conference.

However, to continue to consolidate this project, to establish objectives, to keep going... we need certainties. We need agreements that will guarantee the continuity of the project while allowing us artistic and political freedom. The question we would like to address publicly to Barcelona City Council and the Catalan Government is clear: when and how will these agreements be formalised?

**In this sense, we want to bring you in on the question: How to continue?**

We want to discuss not just the what, but the how. This is a political question and we don't think the answer should just come from Antic Teatre. 'How' is what we're constantly working on. What is the 'how'? We think we can get there if we all take part. This is also why we have invited everyone from the city here today: artists, journalists, politicians, locals, users of the space and anyone with an interest in Grassroots Culture and the public policies of this city, to think collectively about how communally created projects are kept going.

We won't drop the language of struggle that has helped us to achieve everything we have achieved so far, or the desire for transparency that we are showing in today's press conference. But we need agreements to continue to manage this venue. For Antic Teatre to be able to continue as it is but with financial stability. No more, no less. What agreements and conditions will frame Antic Teatre's existence in the future? What kind of negotiations will be held, under what time-frames and with whom?

This press conference is also a collective call not just to the institutions, but also to the Creation Factories with whom we are in contact, to all the cultural agents of the city, journalists and citizens: we need to focus our energy on common goals that go beyond our own activities. Our link with society extends beyond our artistic programming, even though that is what shapes us. What are we fighting for?

Because we know that the goal of neo-fascism is to disarm the struggle, today we are making a common call to what keeps us going.

**ONE OF THE SUBJECTS THIS PRESS CONFERENCE WANTS TO FOCUS ON, NOW THAT WE ARE ALL HERE, IS THE CURRENT MOVES TO ANNIHILATE AND BREAK UP GRASSROOTS CULTURE IN OUR CITY.**

Something needs to be done about the disparity and the vast and brutal difference between high culture and the elites and the common people, the base. I arrived in Barcelona when I was 19, in 1985, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January this year I will be turning 60. I have been fighting my whole life, first as an anti-fascist because I come from a country that fought Hitler, and in Catalonia and Spain I found an incredible scenario. I got here only 10 years after Franco's death and ever since I have been fighting for equality and equal rights for people, especially in culture and the arts. And I get the feeling that it's just getting worse!

What we have managed to achieve in Antic Teatre, together with other colleagues from the city, is to organise and work from a common front for access to and the practice of art and culture to be a basic right of every human being. This materialised in a cultural movement, **Grassroots Culture and the Barcelona Citizens' Parliament Of Culture**, conceived as a political strategy and active from 2019 to 2023. And it was all achieved in a setting of political activism and volunteering. However, from 2023 when the PSC (Catalan Socialist Party) once more had sole control of the government, there has been a dying-down or an apathy, a lassitude and a systematic breaking up of Grassroots movements and community management. **ANTIC TEATRE STANDS BEHIND THE STATEMENT THAT WE CAN'T LET NEOLIBERALISM BEAT US. WE'RE NOT TIRED OF THE FIGHT. WE WILL DIE FIGHTING.**

We brought together about 70 independent projects from within the city and in 2020, 2021, 2022 we produced a report and a map. Half of these projects are no longer active in 2026!

Resources for culture are administered unfairly. This is the never-ending class struggle.

Who does power belong to? It only belongs to the rich, the well-connected, it belongs to a handful of the privileged. To 'high' culture, to the elites. They decide where our resources go and yet we all pay taxes.

Ask yourselves: who decides cultural policy in your city? Cultural freedom is only enjoyed by those who can afford to buy theatre tickets.

We at Antic Teatre are called 'radical', when what is really radical is a system that gives so much to a handful and denies basic rights to the majority. This is the neoliberal system that transfers public money into private hands.

What truly 'keeps us going' should not be used to feed a model that is grey, mechanical, consumerist, artificial, rushed, stressed, encouraging disconnection, apathy. Concrete can't be fertilised: it is dead ground, hard, it goes with a way of life that exhausts people. We shouldn't be maintaining a system that wears us out or dehumanises us.

In our city, the marketing and **PRIVATISATION** of Culture is a decades-old fact.

Class hatred, hatred of the poor, hatred of those who don't think the same way. What can be expected from a system that, in all this time, from the post-Franco transition to today, has not allowed the existence of an Artists' Statute? What are workers' rights? Artists and cultural and social workers, be aware that we aren't workers until we have a statute. For our closest neighbours in France, this statute has existed since 1934. Here we don't have one because those in power don't want us to have it. Some professional associations have come up with agreements, reports, documents for good practice, but not one law makes any of those agreements enforceable. We aren't workers! And I'm afraid that I'll die without an artists' statute, without the most basic requirement.

We don't get to take part in political decisions! Who decides why a certain institution exists in the City Council or the Catalan Government? Why are these institutions created? To what end? What are their aims? Who decides how a call for something is structured? How are subsidies and grants regulated? Who decides how many millions of euros will be given to a project or why another won't receive a cent, or another just crumbs? How long will this go on? As citizens, we want to take part in all the decision making relating to cultural policy.

### **Transparency**

I am talking about Transparency and Traceability in public policy. One of the pillars of the Grassroots Culture movement is to end the lack of transparency in public management. From the Grassroots Culture movement we understand transparency to mean something more than just making budgets public. It affects decisions and the processes involved in decision taking. We need to establish a system of traceability and citizen scrutiny and control across the entire chain. Here, today, there is no one in representation of 'high' culture or the elites; even though they were all invited, they're not here. The directors of the Teatre Lliure, of the Liceu, the National Theatre of Catalonia, the Palau de la Música, the MACBA, to mention just a few, aren't here, nor are the heads of any other private foundation in our city that runs our public spaces, theatres and museums. All these 'public' venues – cultural institutions visible around the city, that belong to the Council or the Catalan government – who decides who runs them? Private foundations, with private boards and companies funded by public budgets: to be clear, with money belonging to us all. They're not here today. Where is the director of theatrical company Focus? There's the problem right there! They DON'T care. What do they care about the riff-raff?

Luckily, over the years we have built a community, as we don't want to exist in individualist isolation. Thanks to all our allies who are here today! So, here we are! And here we'll stay! The elites know there is nowhere for the production and exhibition – with a budget on a level with theirs – for contemporary theatre and performance. And I'm not even going to mention contemporary circus. It doesn't exist!

The citizens of Barcelona cannot attend contemporary performance art shows, we can't see current art, we are fed mediocre stuff that has nothing to do with current performance languages. At Antic Teatre, with cups of coffee and glasses of beer, thanks to the bar and with the scantest of public subsidies, we perform miracles. Together with our networks and connections, because we would not exist without them. I give a little bit, someone else gives another little bit, so does someone else, and bit by bit we try and put together a joint production; but they remain incredibly precarious.

We're talking about the fact that for the cost of a production at the Teatre Lliure – as theatre company **Atresbandes** say in their last show, **LESHI** – you could buy a flat in Barcelona. These productions cost €200,000 or €500,000 or more, while we frequently work for free or pay for them ourselves, or we end up in debt, losing money. This is self-exploitation, not *empowerment* or *enterprise* as they're trying to manipulate us into thinking.

In Oriol Puig Taulé's latest article, titled "*I qui dia passa, any empeny*" – thank you for being here Oriol! – he says:

<https://www.nuvol.com/teatre-i-dansa/dansa/qui-dia-passa-any-empeny-466897>

*"Catalan theatre continues to suffer, and the ills we have been repeating for so many years are becoming endemic. Overproduction, the extreme brevity of runs, and the absence of a genuine circuit that would allow the marvellous municipal theatres and auditoriums we have here in Catalonia to be filled with the full range of diverse and multidisciplinary programmes over and above the established names in commercial theatre. Constantly repeating the formulas for success: adaptations of novels, rehashes of musicals that were successful thirty years ago or inventions that should perhaps have been tested on Coca-Cola. "*I qui dia passa, any empeny*" (a Catalan saying meaning something like, "get through the day and move the year along"). The upcoming show directed by Julio Manrique at the Teatre Lliure (*El barquer*) has nineteen performers and will probably cost more than the Joan Brossa Foundation's programme for the entire season. Antic Teatre continues to walk the (almost permanent) tightrope and I keep worrying that I'll leave the house and when I come back it will have been bought by *El Mago Pop*."*

With regard to the Grassroots Movement, we also want to protest the closure of the **Perifèria Cimarronas** theatre this very month, in January 2026.

Here are some of the statements from their communique:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u19604csojtxk8vbtcigotzbheahxxfq/view>

*We're closing.*

*We didn't make it.*

*It's a loss and we can do nothing but accept it, understand it, learn from it and keep moving forward.*

*We don't want to activate a "Save the Perifèria" campaign. We don't think it would be any use.*

*It would be a temporary sticking plaster and we'd just go on bleeding out slowly.*

*We came from spaces such as Black Barcelona and Tinta Negra, collectives for Black actors in Catalonia.*

*Do you remember when it was said that there were no Black actors in Catalonia? That's why Tinta Negra emerged. We soon discovered that there weren't enough Afro productions, nor enough creators, directors, technicians. Perifèria was a way to support creation.*

*Most of the artists who have been through Perifèria are unknown in the city. Many are small companies, migrant, trans. The local artists can bring in family and friends; the artists from elsewhere either have no social media presence or just can't get the audiences.*

*One of the problems is most likely exactly that: we're Black women, and Black women aren't 'in'.*

*Also, our theatre is anti-racist, and many of our productions pose awkward questions about whiteness or masculinity, and most cultural critics come from one or both of these collectives.*

*At the beginning, when we were a novelty, there was a surge of attention, but it died down. We're aware that another factor is our work is not in Catalan.*

*BEFORE WE REACHED THIS DECISION, I TRIED ONE LAST STRATEGY. I MET WITH THE CITY COUNCIL TO EXPLORE POTENTIAL AVENUES. THERE I SAW THERE WAS ONE SMALL CHANCE FOR US TO CONTINUE: BY BECOMING A CREATION FACTORY OR A MIXED SPACE. BUT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE. AS FAR AS THE CITY COUNCIL IS CONCERNED, AS OF TODAY, IT'S NOT AN OPTION. AND WE'VE RUN OUT OF ENERGY TO FIGHT THAT BATTLE.*

*So from January 2026, Perifèria will no longer have a venue. We'll be itinerant.*

*We'll carry on producing theatre in other venues, thinking about different ways to change the world, at least for a while. But I hope Perifèria will keep a place in your memory and, if possible, also in your heart.*

Silvia Albert Sopale  
Barcelona, December 15, 2025

We at Antic thank you for these past 5 years.

AND WE CONTINUE TO ASK THE QUESTION: WHY ARE OUR PROJECTS AT THE MERCY OF PUBLIC AUDIENCE SUBSIDIES, WHILE THE ELITE THEATRES HAVE AGREEMENTS AND CONCESSIONS APPARENTLY GIVEN OUT JUST LIKE THAT? WHO DECIDES THAT PERIFÈRIA CIMARRONAS CAN'T BE A CREATION FACTORY, AND WHY?

The other project currently at risk is **Arnau Itinerant**.

Here are some statements from their manifesto, which was released just a few days ago:

PUBLIC MANIFESTO Teatre Arnau  
<https://coordinadoradentitatspelteatrearnau.com/?p=1406>

*In support of Teatre Arnau vs the new model imposed by the City Council and against cultural policies that break up community management in Barcelona.*

*Culture is a right.*

*Participation cannot be erased.*

*Teatre Arnau is not for sale.*

*The will of the neighbourhoods, locals and professionals involved in this process since 2016 must be respected.*

*WE CANNOT ACCEPT THAT CASH-COW MEGAPROJECTS (SUCH AS LICEUMAR FOR 30 MILLION EUROS, THYSSEN MUSEUM AND THE EXTENSION OF THE MNAC FOR 140 MILLION EUROS) ARE SUPPORTED WHILE GRASSROOTS CULTURE IS DENIED EVEN ITS BASIC NEEDS. TEATRE ARNAU IS THE BATTLEGROUND WHERE CULTURE AS A RIGHT IS PITTED AGAINST CULTURE AS MERCHANDISE.*

*We defend culture created from the bottom up.*

*We defend the right of neighbourhoods to reach their own decisions.*

We would also like to mention **Nau Bostik**, who celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025. We denounce the total lack of communication from Barcelona City Council. It's not as if they're not continuously requesting it, they're just ignored.

<https://naubostik.com/>

Congratulations, Jorge.

**We demand new policies and a new focus on power.**

**An end to financial inequality.**

**The replacement of cold individualism with the warmth of Collectivism and Solidarity.**

**Long live the Antic!**