

Macnas Career Development
Bursary
Mo Thiesenhusen
Project Report
January 31, 2025

Receiving the Macnas Career Development Bursary has been an extraordinary gift, allowing me to embark on a journey of artistic and professional growth that has exceeded all my expectations. This project, in collaboration with Teatre de Caixó, has deepened my understanding of Forum Theatre, expanded my network of like-minded practitioners, and strengthened my commitment to using theatre as a tool for education and social change. Perhaps most excitingly, the relationships built during this process have laid the groundwork for future collaborations, particularly with the University of Galway and the University of Valencia, ensuring that the impact of this experience will continue to evolve in meaningful and unexpected ways.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of this experience was my time with Marc Escrig and Teatre de Caixó in Valencia, where I had the privilege of working alongside incredibly talented and passionate theatre practitioners. This in-person work was especially meaningful because it came shortly after unprecedented floods that left three towns in Valencia's perimeter decimated. As such, it is true that the timeline and event-planning of the project did not go according to plan. Initially, Marc was meant to lead two classes of the Applied Theatre Masters at the University of Valencia on November 20th and 21st 2024, but all classes were taken online after the natural disaster. However, this collaborative project did persevere to engage in three important activities throughout the week including a didactic workshop, a secondary school engagement, and a productive conference call with the University of Galway and the Active* Consent project.

One of Marc's many commitments in the field of Applied Theatre is to teach others how to use these tools to find success in their communities. For the six weeks previous to my arrival, Marc had been working with secondary school teachers of various subjects at Centre de Formació, Innovació i Recursos Educatius (CEFIRE) in Valencia to impart a few key practices of Applied Theatre under the wider repertoire of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed school, including Image Theatre and Newspaper Theatre. I was lucky to get involved in the last two weeks of the workshop series, on November 19th and 26th 2024 (Appendix, 1). While these workshops were held in valenciano, a regional language I do not speak, my Spanish and Marc's expert facilitation meant I had no problem fully participating. As a graduate of the University of Valencia's Applied Theatre Masters program, Marc's wide breadth of knowledge contributed immensely to the impact of the physical exercises, and it was truly incredible to watch Boal's theater games deeply engage the participants in the examination of potent subjects like gender violence and climate change. The participants left Marc's workshop series excited and optimistic about their ability to employ Theatre of the Oppressed in their classrooms to help their students have conversations with their peers about important topics. I also left the workshops reflecting on the use of Valencian in the workshops, as it also provided an invaluable learning experience, offering insight into how regional languages shape accessibility, identity, and cultural engagement in theatre.

The second engagement Marc was kind enough to involve me in was a tour of Teatre de Caixó to the CEIP Jaime Sanz secondary school in Peníscola, a town to the north of Valencia city (Appendix, 2). There, Marc, one of his company actors, and his technical director presented two of their multi-media Forum Theatre shows, “Com quedem?” and “Per què a mi?”. Both of these shows are performed in valenciano, as the language’s proliferation is another cardinal aim of Teatre de Caixó. The first show depicts secondary school kids engaged in sexual harassment and gender violence on their phones, while the second further explores the impact of cyberbullying on school-age children. This could have been a difficult crowd to work with, as they are at a rambunctious and self-conscious age, but Marc and his fellow actor applied a few theatre games to quickly engage with the kids. From there, the students felt connected with the themes and, once the initial performance had concluded, they were keen to contribute to the group forum conversation about their own related experiences. Then, three brave volunteers stepped into the role of “spect-actors”, redirecting the action, standing up to the bullies, and offering alternative perspectives on the narrative. For everyone in the gymnasium, it was a powerful reminder of the potential theatre has to engage every kind of person, open a dialogue on taboo or uncomfortable themes, and lead to real change. For Marc and Teatre de Caixó, these two Forum Theatre shows are not just about representing important stories, but also creating spaces where communities can explore solutions together.

Another major highlight of this project has been the opportunity to collaborate with Dr. Charlotte McIvor at the University of Galway. Her expertise in Theatre for Social Change has enriched my understanding of how Applied Theatre can be used to facilitate dialogue around complex social issues. On November 21st 2024, I facilitated a conversation between Marc, Dr. McIvor, and Gavin Friel, Active* Consent’s Program Co-Ordinator and Research Assistant in The School of Psychology at the University of Galway. Gavin’s notes to this conversation are included in the appendix of this report, and demonstrate how Galway and Valencia are currently contributing tectonic work to their respective communities and how they hope to collaborate collectively in the future (Appendix, 3). Galway’s work with the Active* Consent program, which uses devised theatre to address topics of sexual consent and gender-based violence, aligns closely with the themes Teatre de Caixó is exploring in Spain. It has been incredible to see how our work intersects, and I am thrilled by the prospect of continuing to develop these connections in the future, particularly in exploring how research-driven theatre can be applied across different cultural and linguistic contexts.

I am delighted to report that one such subsequent collaboration has already taken part! On January 23rd 2025, Marc was welcomed as a virtual guest lecturer by Dr. McIvor as part of her Applied Theatre module within the Masters program (Appendix, 4). Marc is a skilled orator, and his experience, knowledge, and perspective was an important addition to McIvor’s incredible module. On the themes of Boal and Forum Theatre, which they had recently studied, the MA students were incredibly receptive to and interested in Marc’s applied knowledge of the field. Following the lecture, McIvor expressed her sincere excitement about this budding relationship between Teatre de Caixó and the University of Galway.

Looking ahead, I am especially excited about the potential of collaborating with the University of Valencia. Marc, a regular didactic lecturer, will lead two classes of the Applied

Theatre Masters program on February 18th and 19th 2025 and I have been invited to attend virtually. Moreover, Marc has arranged for us to have a conversation with the program directors, Tomás Motos and Toni Navarro. Given Teatre de Caixó's strong presence in the Valencian theatre community and their dedication to education and social transformation, the university presents a natural academic partner for expanding this work, perhaps in collaboration with the University of Galway and Active* Consent. We have begun conversations about potential joint workshops, research initiatives, and student exchange programs that would allow artists and scholars from Ireland and Spain to collaborate through Theatre of the Oppressed and Applied Theatre in meaningful ways. I believe this partnership could play a key role in further developing the intersection of theatre, language acquisition, and social change.

This journey has been one of profound learning, both artistically and personally. Working so closely with Teatre de Caixó has given me invaluable hands-on experience in Forum Theatre facilitation, refining my ability to use theatre as a space for conversation, education, and empowerment. As a former ESL teacher, I have always been fascinated by the ways in which theatre can support language learning and community integration. This project has reinforced my belief that performance can be a bridge—between languages, cultures, and perspectives. It has also given me a renewed sense of purpose as both a theatre practitioner and educator, and I am eager to carry these lessons forward in my future work.

What excites me most is that this is only the beginning. The connections formed during this project have already sparked plans for continued collaboration, particularly with Teatre de Caixó and the University of Galway. The prospect of partnering with the University of Valencia adds another exciting dimension to this work, offering new opportunities for research and artistic exchange. I look forward to seeing how these collaborations evolve and to continuing to explore how theatre can be used to foster dialogue, challenge societal norms, and create spaces for collective empowerment.

I cannot express enough gratitude to Macnas for making this experience possible. The bursary allowed me to fully immerse myself in this work, covering essential travel, accommodation, and operational costs. By alleviating financial barriers, the bursary allowed for a deeper and more meaningful exchange, enabling me to focus entirely on learning, collaborating, and growing as an artist.

This experience has reaffirmed my belief in the power of theatre to connect people, amplify voices, and inspire change. It has been an incredible privilege to be part of this journey, and I am filled with gratitude for the support that has made it possible. Thanks to the Macnas Career Development Bursary, this project has not only been a success but has laid the foundation for a future rich with creative possibilities.

APPENDIX

1.



GENERALITAT
VALENCIANA

Conselleria d'Educació, Cultura,
Universitats i Ocupació

19/11/2024

Referència **24AE96IN091**

Full d'assistència al curs: "Estratègies dramàtiques per a la dinamització de l'aula"

Convocatòria Administracions públiques

Campanya2024

FULL D'ASSISTÈNCIA

Estratègies dramàtiques per a la dinamització de l'aula

Codi: **24AE96IN091**

Data de realització: **de 24/09/2024 a 12/11/2024**

Durada: **24 h**

Lloc de realització: **CEFIRE de València (VALÈNCIA)**

Horari: *19 de Novembre*

Marc Escip

Núm	DNI	Cognoms, Nom	Centre de destí	Signatura
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AULES TRANSFORMADORES D'ESPAIS I METODOLOGIES EDUCATIVES



GENERALITAT
VALENCIANA
Conselleria d'Educació, Cultura,
Universitats i Ocupació



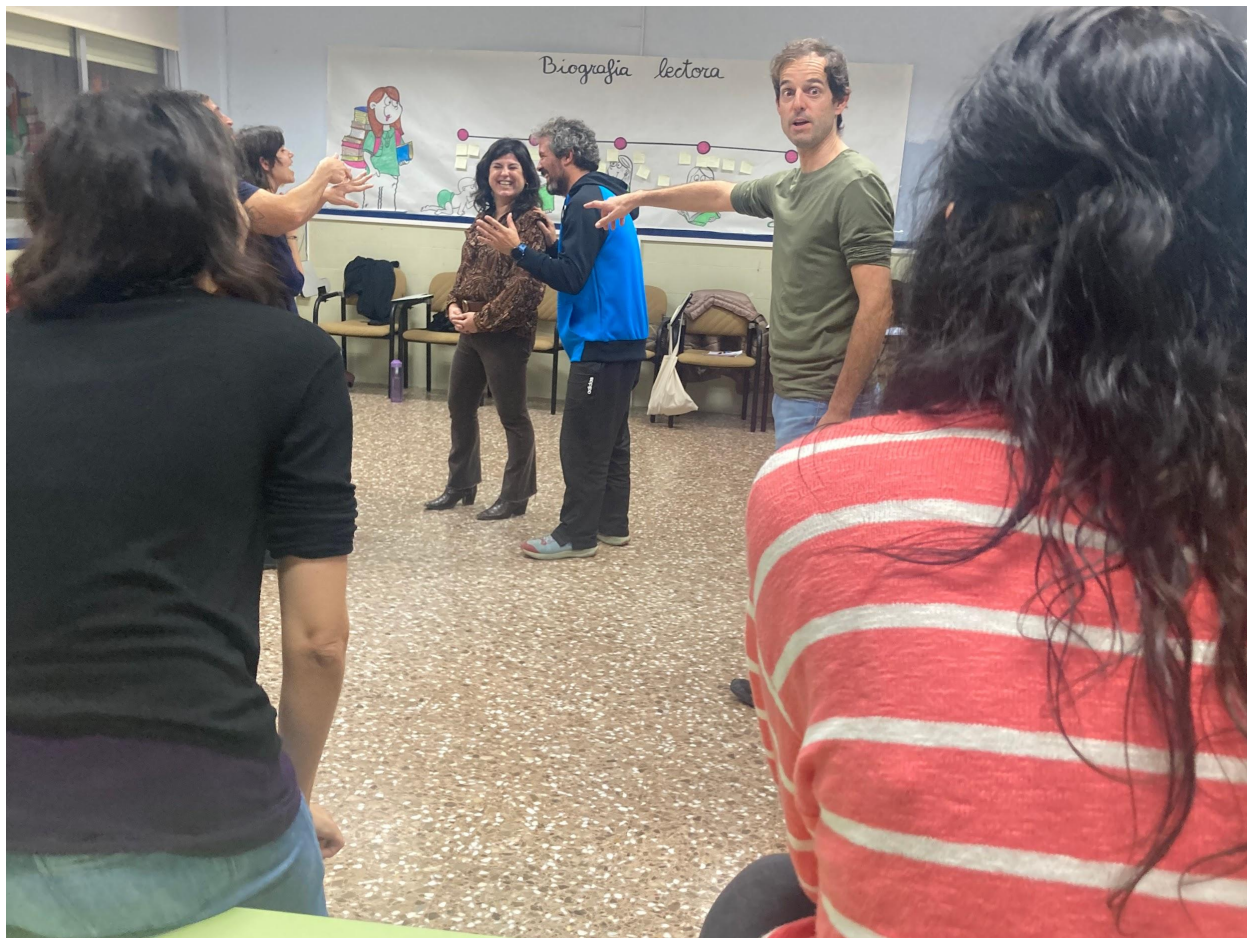
CEFIRE
VALÈNCIA









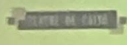
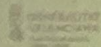


2.



PER QUÈ A MI?

TEATRE FÒRUM SOBRE CIBERASSETJAMENT



XQAMI?











3.

External Meeting: Teatre de Caixó, Valencia

Internal attending

Charlotte McIvor; Gavin Friel

External attending

Mo Thiesenhusen; Marc Escrig

Overview of Collaboration Background

- **Marc Escrig's connection with Mo:**
 - They met through the Perform Europe platform, which connects artists and companies for European collaborations.
 - Mo is in Valencia on a career development bursary from Macnas to learn about Marc's company, Forum Theatre, and its potential applications in Ireland.

Active Consent Program in Ireland

- **Gavin's role in the Active Consent program:**
 - Initially joined as an actor during the program's Irish university tours starting in 2019.
 - Progressed to a **research assistant role**, studying the psychological impact of theatre on audience attitudes toward consent and sexual violence.
 - Later became the **Theatre and Performing Arts Program Coordinator**, leading a national tour of secondary schools in 2023.
 - Currently developing new initiatives such as **film analysis workshops** and **performative workshops** to further skill-building in sexual violence prevention.

Discussion of Theatre Methodologies

- **Forum Theatre:**
 - Irish audiences are described as hesitant about interactive theatre.
 - Forum Theatre techniques are adapted to be less intimidating while maintaining a focus on audience agency.
 - Workshops are designed with a **consent-based lens**, balancing audience comfort with skill-building.
- **Spanish Context (Marc's Work):**
 - Marc's company, Teatre de Caixó, creates performances focused on gender-based violence and toxic relationships, often using input from teenagers to craft scripts.
 - Performs primarily in high schools with a **focus on promoting self-reflection**, allowing participants to reach their own conclusions.

- Addresses cyberbullying and the influence of social media on relationships.
- Incorporates **regional elements like the Valenciano language** to connect with local audiences.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Irish and Spanish cultural considerations:**
 - Irish audiences tend to be reserved and wary of public participation due to cultural norms around humility (“notions”).
 - Spanish audiences are described as talkative and engaged, though sometimes uncomfortable and defensive.
 - Both contexts highlight the importance of **meeting audiences where they are**, using humour and positive messaging.
- **Funding and support:**
 - Irish program: Government-backed with a mix of temporary political support and long-term efforts for cultural change.
 - Spanish program: Regional funding for applied theatre and gender politics, though political shifts pose challenges to sustaining initiatives.

Educational and Professional Development

- **University Collaborations:**
 - In Valencia, an applied theatre master's program trains students in various methodologies, including Forum Theatre, physical theatre, and puppetry.
 - Irish counterparts are developing drama and social engagement modules for BA and MA students.
 - Both programs emphasize networking and resource sharing across countries and disciplines.
- **Youthreach Initiative in Ireland:**
 - Pilot workshops target marginalized groups like working-class youth and ethnic minorities.
 - Workshops focus on building trust, gathering feedback, and refining approaches to improve learning outcomes.

Potential Collaborations

- **Immediate ideas for exchange:**
 - The participants expressed enthusiasm for **virtual workshops** as a first step toward collaboration, leveraging the experience of adapting to online formats during COVID-19. These workshops could focus on:
 - Sharing methodologies like Forum Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, and performance-based workshops tailored to sexual violence prevention and consent.

- Demonstrating practical exercises to teach critical skills, such as fostering group discussions, managing resistance, and navigating cultural discomforts.
- **Artistic and cultural exchanges:**
 - Exploring the possibility of **theatre exchanges**, including bringing Marc's show to Ireland and Active* Consent's play to Spain, while adapting scripts and performances to reflect cultural specificity.
 - Using exchanges to explore **integrating technology into performances**, such as Marc's use of music videos to set context and stimulate audience reflection.
- **Teacher training collaboration:**
 - Developing joint programs to train educators in applied theatre methods, such as Boaliantechiques, image theatre, and playback theatre. These could be used to engage both Irish and Spanish students in discussions around consent, gender-based violence, and interpersonal relationships.
- **Building academic bridges:**
 - Establishing partnerships between universities to foster **applied theatre research and teaching exchanges**. This could include:
 - Guest lectures via Zoom.
 - Sharing curricula and teaching materials on applied theatre and social engagement.
 - Language-based collaborations where Irish and Spanish educators could incorporate theatre into language learning.
- **Long-term goals:**
 - Securing funding through European programs to sustain collaborations.
 - Expanding beyond workshops to develop **bilingual materials**, including video tutorials, written guides, and lesson plans that can be disseminated across educational institutions in both countries.

Concluding Remarks

- Participants expressed mutual enthusiasm for the collaboration and emphasized the value of their shared goals:
 - **Next steps:**
 - Each team will consult internally to brainstorm specific ideas for a potential **Zoom exchange in winter or spring**.
 - Participants will share resources, including:
 - Recordings of plays and workshops from both programs.
 - Didactic materials, such as workshop templates, audience engagement strategies, and follow-up activities for schools.
 - Articles and reports on their respective methodologies and research findings.
 - **Exploring European funding opportunities:**
 - Marc highlighted the need to leverage European programs for sustained collaboration amid fluctuating regional political support.

- Both sides agreed to investigate potential funding streams to expand their partnership and enable broader resource sharing.
- **Fostering connections:**
 - Mo offered to serve as a liaison to ensure communication between the teams remains consistent and productive.
 - Marc suggested his team could engage Irish audiences and educators through workshops on topics like gender-based violence, cyberbullying, and language exchange.
 - The Active* Consent team proposed integrating Marc's expertise into their teacher training initiatives, particularly as Ireland's SPHE (Social Personal Health Education) curriculum expands to include consent education.
- **Final thoughts:**
 - Participants emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptability in addressing universal themes like consent, relationships, and gender-based violence.
 - They concluded with optimism about their shared commitment to making impactful changes through theatre and education.

13:31 Thu 23 Jan

Zoom 37:23

100%



Molly Thiesenhusen



Charlotte McIvor



Marc Escrig (Teatre de Caixó)

Unmute

Stop video

Participants 3

Chat

Reactions

Share

Record

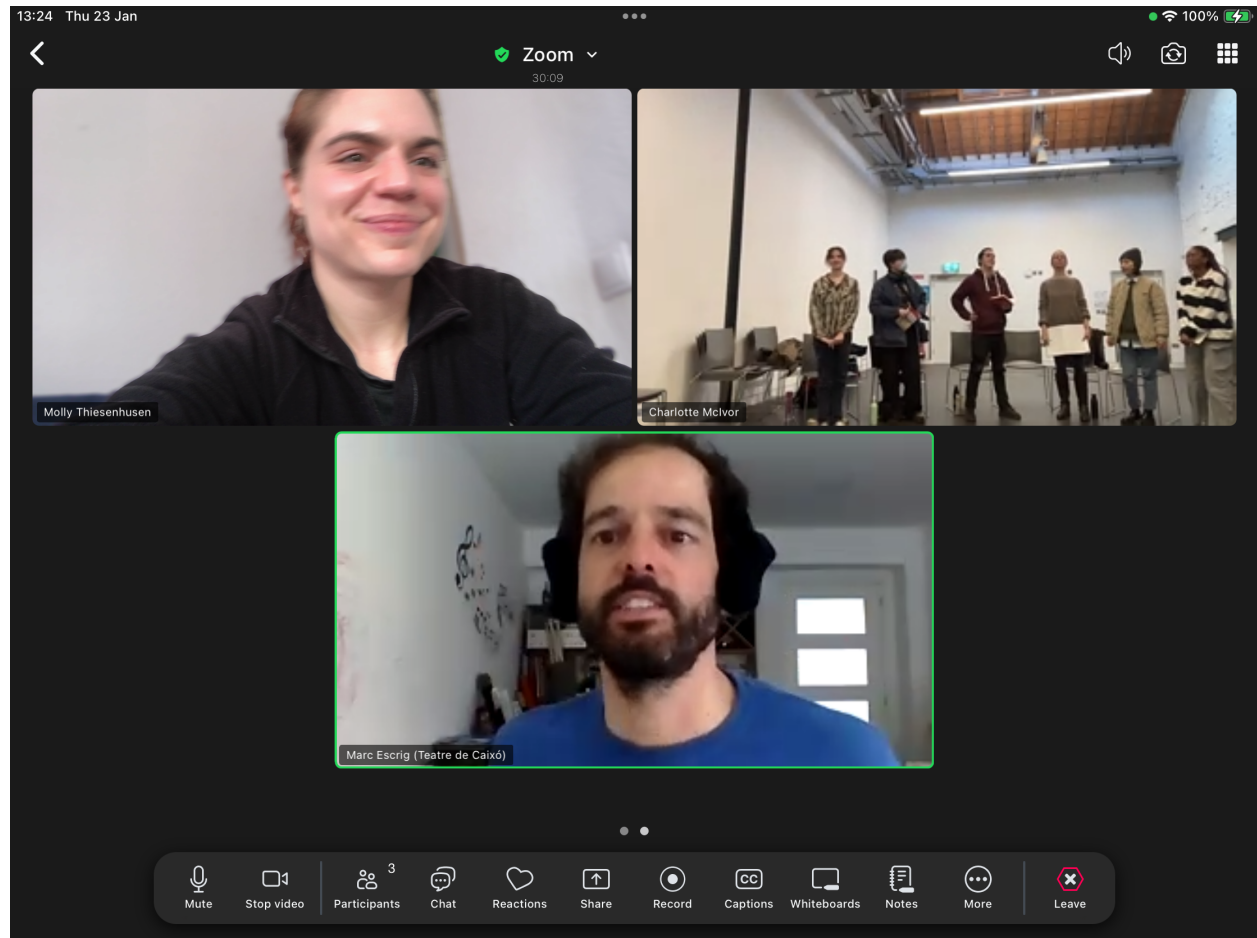
Captions

Whiteboards

Notes

More

Leave



5. Supplemental Activities in Valencia

PROGRAMA

10.00 - 10.30

Recepció i recollida de materials

10.30 h - 11.15 h

Alexandre Bataller,
Universitat de València**Cançó i territori, en la perspectiva de l'ensenyament de llengües**

11.15 - 12.00 h

Jordi Oviedo, DDLL, UV
La importància de la poesia musicada en la música en valencià: el cas d'Estellés

12.00 - 12.30

PAUSA DESCANS

12.30 h - 13.15 h

André Conforte, professor de la Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

La metasamba: metaverbalitat en la cançó popular brasilera

13.15 h - 14.00 h

Aina Monferrer (Universitat de València) i Julieta Torrents (Universitat de Vic-UCC)

El transfolk: hipòtesi i experiències d'aula

DESCANS DINAR

16.15 h - 17.00 h

Víctor Camarasa
Proposta didàctica sobre cançó improvisada

17 h - 17.45 h

Rafael Arnal (Universitat de Saragossa) i Adolf Murillo (Universitat de València)

Propostes sobre patrimoni valencià a l'aula de música

17.45 h - 18.30 h

Susana Díaz Tejedor (CEIP Blasco Ibáñez, Aldaia) i Noèlia Llorens 'Titana' (CEE Professor Sebastián Burgos, la Torre, València)

Espardenyes i a volar! Presentació de materials didàctics



INSTITUT
VALENCIÀ
DE CULTURA

Programació a

VALÈNCIA

SETEMBRE | OCTUBRE | NOVEMBRE | DESEMBRE
2024

TEATRE
DIALETO

Plaça de l'Ajuntament, 17



LA MANCHA

DIA: 21/11/2024 HORA: 10:30h.

Platea Fila : 4 Butaca : 1

Tarifa: General

Preu: 5,00 Eur.

(Exempt d'iva)

Localitzador: YXY1258788R7Z00 - 4651046-1 - 1046510461338001 CIF PROMOTOR: Q9655132J

