This journal issue aims to examine how the concept of fluidity provides useful tools to rethink and analyse theatre and performance in both historical and contemporary times, and how it invites, more generally, critical perspectives on the mutations that have affected theatre stages in Europe and elsewhere.

In her article ‘Fluid Philosophy’, Keren Chiaroni argues that ‘Philosophy’s elaboration of concepts and theories has long depended on an earth-bound lexicon of continents and grounds, islands, terrains, reference-points and touchstones. This way of thinking about our being-in-the-world betrays our condition as humans, “forgetting” that we are creatures born into movement and subject to constant flux.’ (Chiaroni 2016: 108) The invitation for this Call for Proposals is ‘to change the element with which we think’ (ibidem), and to start from liquid thinking (Didi-Huberman 2017) in order to reconceptualize our realities from the fluidities that reign our body, our planet and the time-space in which we live. We see fluidity not only as (a) matter and a metaphor but also as a vector that calls for perpetual change. Within this virtually limitless idea of fluidity, we would propose the following three lines of inquiry:

1) Liquid Materialities on Stage

This first subtheme aims to trace various histories of fluids in the performing arts. Fluids were often used as a spectacular element in the history of theatre: one can think of the ancient Roman tradition of staging naval battles, known as naumachias (Gay 2015). Another genre that was highly popular in Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century was the so-called nautical melodrama or aqua drama with stories of shipwrecks and naval battles which were shown in theatres equipped with enormous water tanks (Mukherjee 2018). Equally popular was the Grand Guignol, which names both a genre and a specific theatre institution in Paris that had its peak in the first half of the twentieth century. Here, the audience loved to come and watch the horror entertainment with blood flowing in many shades of red (Hand, and Wilson 2012). One could also refer to the second half of the twentieth century when performance artists began to work with liquids of various kinds: from the spilling of paint to free themselves from the fixed, painted canvas to the gushing of diverse bodily fluids to challenge predominant norms of both normality and morality (Kulterman 1971; Vergine 1974; Inga-Pin 1978). Nearly fifty years later, many performances continue to work with fluids, raising the question what new values have gradually been associated with these liquids.

Some specific topics are particularly worth considering in order to rethink the role of fluids on contemporary stages: the spilling of the ‘opaque matter of’ paint’ (Cassegrain 2015), and its relationship with the irrational, the unspeakable and the nonsensical; the appearance of
fake blood as an element with a long theatrical history, that reoccurs, again and again, in new contexts with new meanings; the use of water in a practical sense to sweep or even clean the stage, or in a more figurative sense as a diluvial metaphor; or as a paradoxically structuring element for the creation of a liquid imaginary. Water on stage obviously raises ecological concerns too: in times of climate change, water can become an element of loss and mourning, or an appeal to raise awareness of environmental threat. Either a lack or excess of water deeply effects our human living conditions, our cities, our ecosystems, our lives.

Possible topics along this line of inquiry may include (but are not limited to):

- the presence of liquids on stage as a matter that challenges and exhaust all kinds of boundaries;
- histories of the use of water in theatre, dance and entertainment shows;
- bloody stages: the attraction to and repulsion of (fake) blood;
- tsunami’s, storms, and desertification: ecological threats relating to water.

2) The Becoming-Fluid of Boundaries

In a broader sense, contemporary stages may be characterised by a becoming-fluid that goes beyond the flows of liquids and rather appears as the phenomenological expression of a more general abolition of boundaries. This notion of becoming-fluid draws attention to the increasing number of performances that explore the fluidity between gender and sexual identities (Butler 1990; Bourcier 2001; Moles 2003). Once again, this tendency takes part in a longer history of subverting gender roles in theatre, of which Shakespeare’s comedies are perhaps the most paradigmatic example. Some performances go beyond the sole question of gender and sex, and develop on stage a genuine becoming-animal (Armengaud, Dubus and Saison 2001; Agamben 2003), which can realize itself through acting or through co-habiting the stage with (an) animal(s). It can also take the form of explorations of excess and disfiguration; that is, a body that ‘expands until it coexists with the things of the world, a body that is transformed into the flesh of the world’ (Miglietti 2003: 115). The notion of becoming as conceived by Gilles Deleuze (Bankston 2017), but also that of mestizaje established by the American philosopher Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), may help to shed light on this second line of thought.

Possible topics along this line of inquiry may include (but are not limited to):

- gender and sexual fluidities on contemporary and historical stages;
- becoming something else, explorations of undefined presence;
- silent questions of animals on stage;
- becoming fluid as an expression of non-duality.

3) Fluidity of Space, Time and Creative Work

As the authors of the recent volume, Le cinquième mur (The Fifth Wall) observe, contemporary stage forms are characterised by ‘the affirmation of an artificial and malleable time-space’ (Boisson, Fernandez, and Vautrin 2021: 10). Time-space becomes liquid, so to speak, in a constant flux of different temporal and spatial layers, going back and forth on the reality-virtuality continuum (Migram et al. 1995). The concept of ‘liquid modernity’ coined by Zygmunt Bauman, who writes that ‘fluids, so to speak, neither fix space nor bind time’ (2000: 2), may help to better formulate the issues at stake here, in wider frameworks of modernity and
capitalism. Theatre stages seem to provide the mirror image of societies driven by the ‘growing conviction that change is the only permanence’ (ibid.). In addition, the idea of constantly changing performances should be examined by questioning the growing centrality of the laboratory format or by paying attention to those companies and ensembles that refuse to fixate their work until encountering an audience. The performing arts are in themselves always inherently unfinished, but this ephemeral and fluid dimension can be stretched much further until its maximum.

Possible topics along this line of inquiry may include (but are not limited to):

- dissolving time-space, liquid temporalities, multiple dimensions of reality;
- the ‘unfinished’ genre: issues around repetition and change;
- fluid ways of production and representation, of ensembles and audience;
- theatre as a mirror of our liquid modern society.

Proposal submissions:

- Proposals should be written in UK English, in MS Word format and be between 600 and 700 words. Please include a brief bio (max. 100 words) in your proposal submission and send it by email to the guest editors (see contacts below) by 22 September 2022. Proposals must be based on original, unpublished work not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- Proposals should specify in which language the article will be submitted. The journal is open to articles written in the language of the author’s preference, but please note that for all articles written in languages other than English contributors will be asked to secure professional proof-reading.
- If your proposal is accepted, you will be invited to submit a first draft of your article by 15 December 2022. The maximum length of the final article should not exceed 9000 words (including abstract in English and in at least one additional language, references, author bio, etc.). Submitted articles will undergo a double-blind peer-review process by two anonymous experts.
- Prospective authors should familiarize themselves with the EJTP Author Guidelines, which can be downloaded here: https://journal.eastap.com/submission-guidelines/.

Schedule:
Proposals: 22 September 2022 (note of acceptance by 29 September 2022)
First Drafts: 15 December 2022
Final Drafts: 20 March 2023
Publication: June 2023

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Issue-related inquiries and proposal submissions should be sent to the issue’s guest editors:
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