

Dear friends at Trans Europe Halles,

We are writing to you from Antic Teatre – Espai de creació (Barcelona) to let you know that the very survival of this social and cultural centre is under threat, and to ask for your help.

Antic Teatre has been a member of TEH since 2012, when it had been already been active for nine years. It was the result, in 2003, of a free and independent citizen's initiative, becoming established as a grassroots cultural centre in Barcelona to provide a venue for the needs of several artists who were not only trying to realise their own work and encourage creative freedom, but who were also improving the city by recovering a building of undoubted historical value.

So, for the past 17 years Antic Teatre has been producing, showing, and encouraging multidisciplinary performance arts at local, national and international levels, and has been doing so from the very heart of Barcelona City's Gothic Quarter, in a 17th century listed building, with the aim of involving local residential and artistic communities in its activities. As well as providing a space for performances, *l'Antic*, as it is commonly known, has become a hub for relations and encounters between local residents, artist and cultural associations, audiences, and artists. One prime example of this interaction is Antic Teatre's community arts project involving local senior citizens.

Bearing all this in mind, we see Antic Teatre's *raison d'être* and overall objective behind every action it promotes and develops as being the activation of thought: a critical awareness of our surroundings from any perspective (artistic, political, humanist, sociological...) We believe that only when we ourselves fully understand the reality we inhabit are we capable of finding our places within it and acting in a free and consistent manner.

Antic Teatre's activities licence includes a bar with a beer garden that, as well as being a haven for social interactions, is one of the main sources of income for the theatrical element. Although, given its undeniable role in providing a public service, some of its funding is provided by local institutions, Antic Teatre has aspired and attempted to be financially as well as ideologically sustainable and independent. In fact, in 2019 almost 60% of the project was self-financed.

CURRENT SITUATION: ANTIC'S SURVIVAL UNDER THREAT

As a performance producer and exhibitor, Antic Teatre has always held risk and innovation as its leitmotifs; it has been adamant in defending the right to exist of multidisciplinary and cutting-edge performance arts in a field where conservative values and predictability prevail. It is thanks to this that, over the past 17 years, companies such as El Conde de Torrefiel, Pere Faura, Azkona & Toloza, Guillem Mont de Palol y Jorge Dutor, Societat Doctor Alonso, Agnés Mateus y Quim Tarrida, Juan Navarro, and Macarena Recuerda Shepherd were able to produce their first performances with Antic Teatre's support, and have since gone on to perform their shows all over the world.

At the same time, for the past seven years Antic Teatre has been fighting an exponentially growing threat to its continued presence in the building it currently occupies.

Towards the end of 2019, the owner of the building notified his intent to raise the rent by 500% (from 1,500€ to 5,000€ a month) in exchange for an extension of the existing contract, which is due to expire at the end of 2027. There is no way that Antic Teatre can afford such an increase and the proposed hike places the theatre squarely in the middle of the speculation, gentrification, and aggressive capitalist dynamics that Barcelona city is currently experiencing.

In light of this ultimatum, Antic Teatre decided in February 2020 to hold a press conference to explain the project's financial situation and the threat to its continued existence. The event was extensively covered by the media and supported by local citizen and artists' infrastructures; however, to date there has been no concrete support from the institutions in the form of specific solutions that could halt or revert the situation.

In addition, the fact that Antic Teatre publicly shared the proposed rental increase prompted the landlord to submit an official and irreversible notification stating there is no longer any possibility of extending the current contract or changing the existing conditions. What this means is that, as it now stands, Antic Teatre will be forced out of its current location in the heart of the city within the next six and a half years.

And on top of all this, the current coronavirus crisis: for the past two months of strict lockdown, still in force as of today, the bar has been completely closed and approximately thirty shows and live events have been cancelled.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Because of the coronavirus crisis, negotiations with Barcelona City Council, which was acting as an intermediary with the owner of the building as well as other administrations, have been put on hold. It must be noted that even before the pandemic took hold these negotiations had never materialised into any concrete actions, and the type of support being offered had not been specified.

The struggle is two-fold. On the one hand, we are trying to ensure the survival of the venue, as Antic Teatre is the culmination of more than one hundred years of cultural activities within this particular building. We are trying to obtain agreement from the authorities that the property will continue to fulfil its historical purpose by limiting the potential activities carried out in it to its current cultural role. On the other hand, we are still fighting for institutional recognition of Antic Teatre's social and cultural project and for support for its continued existence outside its current physical location.

We need the council to publicly recognise that they have a responsibility in the current situation whereby Barcelona is being turned into a cultural wasteland, and we need them to put a halt to and reverse the disappearance of social and cultural venues such as ours.

In this endeavour, we believe letters of support are a vital means of providing pressure; this means any communication Trans Europe Halles might address to Barcelona City Council and, if the situation can be shared with other organisation members, any missives that they could send on their own behalf.

On our part, we are happy to engage in any conversations to dispel doubts, answer questions, etc.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Best regards,

Antic Teatre Team.