

Editorial

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Issue 37 of *Estudis Escènics* commemorates the memory of Jaume Melendres' work and personality and it can do so because, as Head of Cultural Services of the Institut del Teatre, he encouraged and put much effort into taking the publication to its new phase when, directed for the first few years by Joan Casas, it became once again the academic magazine of the Institut del Teatre. This new lease of life also owes to and is fruit of Jaume Melendres' identification of its need, his vision and his determination.

As we close this issue by writing its editorial we are convinced that Jaume Melendres would have liked to have read and known many of the things that it discusses and we lament that our academic and professional community often fails to communicate with its most significant representatives during their lifetime. Knowing this only helps those who are still alive and our only consolation is that of being able to illuminate, with all that we have managed to construct while putting together this issue of *Estudis Escènics*, the memory of those who have left us. In this particular case, this applies to the prolific contribution and work of Jaume Melendres.

A personality, be it average or complex, cannot be apprehended at a glance and neither can Jaume Melendres'. This is the reason why we are aware that we are at the beginning of a process of discovery which will unveil the direction and itinerary followed by Jaume Melendres in his long professional life. Here we are offering a poly-hydric vision of Jaume Melendres but we are also aware that not all the sides have been enlightened equally and that it is quite possible and most likely that some have not been illuminated at all and that there are paths which will remain to be explored in the future.

We have guided our gaze towards five as-



pects which will help us build his configuration. They have been presented in alphabetical order as have the authors of the articles (critics and theorists, educationalists and translators) in each subsection of the internal structure. We believe that the addition of these five aspects gets us closer to Jaume Melendres' diversity, richness and complexity. As we have said, we are sure that we have not covered the whole journey but we would like to believe that at least we have started it off in the right direction.



Jaume Melendres was a playwright and as such he constitutes a specific chapter in the history of our recent theatre. As stated by Pere Riera, his piece follows Melendres' developmental process and updates its points of reference which many readers and spectators still believed to be anchored in the first dramaturgy he developed in the 60s and 70s –the moment when Melendres arrived in the cultural and intellectual scene of the country. However, as an author, it is becoming obvious that he is a wider and unusually complex character as his creative voice was carried on into several other genres. Feliu Formosa reminds us of the first Melendres, the poet, as an author in search of his own voice, while Àlex Broch places us before the narrative complexity of the author of a “brief but not minor” oeuvre elaborated in a highly personal fashion in terms of narrative construction for the benefit of capturing what are in fact highly convoluted and difficult interpersonal relationships.

The sections addressing the critical and theoretical aspects of his personality represent an important contribution to the overall weight of this special number of *Estudis Escènics*. The presence and strength of his intellectual persona dominated his final years and still do so today and are, without a doubt, the fruit of a whole life's work devoted to reflecting upon the theatrical fact with unquestionable logic. There are au-

thors whose contribution is linked to specific titles which best explain both their work and the interests that have made it into what it is. Jaume Melendres is the author of *La teoria dramàtica*: the only existing history of Catalan dramaturgy and a work of reference which, due to its cumulative knowledge, dignifies both its author and the culture to which it belongs. Joan Casas introduces us to the particularities of the critical exercise in which Melendres engages and to its weight and role, especially in the pages of *TeleleXprés*, from where he created and projected his personal opinion during the difficult late years of the dictatorship and beginning of the transition to democracy –a critical contribution which earns him a place as a clear and precise witness of the moment. In his text, Jordi Coca initiates the first of various reflections and approximations to the main and highly important critical oeuvre of Jaume Melendres: his dramatic theory. With a close and critical reading, he introduces us to some precise observations such as the recognition of his formulations and the interpretative discourse constructed by Melendres, which in turn and logically become part of the intellectual debate that a work such as *La teoria dramàtica* brings to the fore. Enric Gallén highlights the role that Melendres played in one of the essential debates in Catalan theatre in the nineteen-seventies, referring specifically to two attitudes which, from a critical, and doubtlessly also an ideological perspective, divided the theatrical profession into two opposing factions: the defenders and detractors of either the author-based theatre or the collective creation. Jaume Mascaró, who was responsible for presenting *La teoria dramàtica* at its official launch on 14th June 2007, explained how Melendres formulated that mutually-excluding presentation and also outlined what *La teoria dramàtica* is and what it is not with an exercise which reconstructed and defined the gaze (more of a director than a playwright or actor) which oriented Melendres in the writing of his *Magnus*

opus, and reminded us that the most quoted authors in the book are Shakespeare, Aristotle and Diderot. Maite Pasqual mentions how the structure of *La teoria dramàtica* maps that of a three-act play with its own didactic scenes and situations. She describes and analyzes the order and composition of each act with what amounts to an analysis of the evolution of the “journey through theatrical thought”, which not only is the subtitle of the work but the very essence that inspired the author in his writing of his book (which is logically open ended). Roberto Scarpa tells us how he met Jaume Melendres and elaborates on the bond and relationship that developed between them in San Miniato. He makes special mention to the Master class that Melendres gave in San Miniato in the Summer of 2007, when he described his memories and the metaphor of the trains at Empoli station, ‘On Isms: Isms and the Electric Train of Empoli’, which we now know was also used as opening speech of the Official Inter-University Theatre Study Masters Programme at the Universitat Autònoma de Bellaterra in the academic year 2009/2010. This text has also become his last publication. As an addition to the activities undertaken in San Miniato, Giulia Puceti, a student and actress, describes her own experience with Melendres’ methods, ways and attitudes when working with and directing actors.

Joan Castells presents and studies Jaume Melendres as stage director and scenographer. Castells remembers that in this facet his work was much more extensive in terms of theatrical pedagogy than in strictly professional stages and follows the reasons underlying this predilection for a certain type of work in which the play with paradox is not accidental. He gets into the thought that orientates his work as director and gives examples, quoting Melendres himself, to analyse his take on a work like *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, which he staged three times in seventeen years. The article ends with a useful

summary of the repertoire directed by Jaume Melendres.

Genoveva Pellicer and Ramon Simó study Jaume Melendres as an educationalist, that is, as Professor at the Institut del Teatre. Genoveva Pellicer explains how after being a student of his, she co-lectured with Jaume Melendres on the ‘Directing course’ for ten years. This allows her to display and analyze Melendres’ work from the inside in terms of pedagogical actions and orientating principles. Thus, she can outline his rules, strategies, precisions –terminological, for instance- stimuli, potentialities and identify his preferred elements to be included in the classes in order to help students/actors to construct and act out the characters assigned to them. Ramon Simó delves into the dark folds he intuitively is hidden behind one of Melendres’ last works, *El parc d’atraccions d’Helena Karsunkel*, and links it to the relationship established and displayed in the work between the psychoanalytical doctor Helena Katsunkel and her pupil Estefania. Simó not only ventures several interpretations of the meaning of the doctor’s name, Katsunkel, but also unravels what could be regarded as an example of transference into the character’s behaviour, attitude and pedagogical relationship with her pupil, reaching the conclusion that as an educationalist Melendres intended that his students should learn to be “free in the exercise of their job”.

Jordi Sala concentrates on another aspect, that of him as a translator, which should not be overlooked when configuring the personality of the man of the Theatre that Melendres was because in his translations and in his relationship with and choice of works we can also find clues and pointers to help us understand and get to know better his intellectual and dramatic interests. In the early seventies, Melendres develops his professional skill as a translator of sociological and economic topics which will later veer towards drama theory until he reaches his most important translation (almost as seminal as the writing of his *Teo-*

ria dramàtica), that is, Patrice Pavis' *Theatre Dictionary* (1998). As for the dramatic pieces themselves, Sala provides a useful list of all the translations Melendres did between 1972 and 2009 and, more importantly, interprets the reasons and significance of his consistency in the choice of authors and plays. His final conclusion is clear: his translations alone would already grant Jaume Melendres top place in the history of our theatre.



Right from the start, the institution that makes the magazine *Estudis Escènics* possible, the Institut del Teatre of the Diputació de Barcelona, and all of those whom from our own areas of responsibility have the commitment of bringing it to fruition knew and accepted that the special issue we dedicated to Jaume Melendres could neither be a hagiographic number nor a collection of memories and expressions of friendship. We knew then and we do now that the best way of vindicating our friend and colleague was, as always, through the study, analysis and promotion of his work. This is what will dignify him and place him most accurately in everyone's memory. This is what we intended and what we hope to have achieved here.

However, friendship and professional respect towards the personality of Jaume Melendres also involve sad feelings and sorrows that we cannot and should not repress. This is why the final part of the issue holds special meaning. Patrice Pavis, with deeply-felt and sincere words, has wanted to offer a text in memory of him as a friend whom he first met as the translator of his *Theatre Dictionary* into Spanish. Pavis has offered a few words remembering their relationship which was unfortunately cut short and never reached the depth the both wished, and contributes a text on theatre today and the theatre of today as testimony to his belief that past and present have the same value. On the other hand, he has also spoken

about interculturality in the world of theatre, the national identity crisis, and decentralization and global theatre -ideas and concepts which would not have been at odds with Jaume Melendres' human, social and political thought.

On the afternoon of 10th may 2010 and with the title 10.5.10. *En record de Jaume Melendres*, Joan Castells directed a remembrance session at the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona to commemorate the teaching work that he had done over several decades. Members of staff, students and friends gathered to pay tribute to the absent friend. During the celebration several brief texts were read reproducing memories and a glossary of events which linked all those present to Jaume Melendres. All those interventions (more than twenty-five) are now included in the section entitled *Ventall Melendres*.

At the beginning of this editorial we stated that in this issue we have not covered all the means of access into the understanding of Jaume Melendres' work, but that we believed that we had started it off in the right direction. In that sense and following the trend developed in the last few issues of the new phase of *Estudis Escènics*, the help and support offered by the centre de Documentació and the Museu de les Arts Escèniques (MAE) of the Institut del Teatre have been relentless and immensely valuable. In this issue of homage to Jaume Melendres the Museu de les Arts Escèniques (MAE), represented by Teresa González, has contributed a "Bibliographical handbook" listing Jaume Melendres' work which will allow readers to increase their knowledge and study and thus facilitate the journey that this issue of *Estudis Escènics* starts and wants to leave open. The information provided is so vast that we can only offer a synthesis of the available materials but it also directs us to the electronic address where they can be fully accessed. From now on this will become essential information for anyone wanting to address any aspect of the study of the personality and work of any part of Jaume Melendres' life.

The article by Roberto Scarpa included in this issue reminds us of the words pronounced by Jaume Melendres in San Miniato: 'Convinced that death does not represent a frontier, I believe it reasonable to undertake a voyage through time in search

of conspiratorial thought'. These are his words and the best way of marking the end of issue 37 of *Estudis Escènics* in his honour. Like him, we too are convinced that intellectual complicities with an author outlive his natural life.

