

## 34th Annual CDE Conference, Prague (Czech Republic), 4-7 June 2026

The German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE) is pleased to announce its 34th Annual Conference. It is organized by Charles University and will be held as a residential conference at Masarykova kolej, Thákurova 1, Prague 6, <https://www.masarykovakolej.cz/en/home>.

### Theatre and Resilience

"Resilience is everywhere; it is the idea and the encounter. It is the root and the branch. It is a travelling concept, a conceptual 'rhizome' that has risen to prominence in debates about how we seek to understand, manage and solve the wicked riddle of uncertain times. It is assembled for different purposes, by diverse actors and, as such, is used in many ways. It may be unstable as it emerges, reconfiguring and reconfigured by the particular materialities and enunciations through which it is imagined, defined and enacted" writes Peter Rogers in *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience*.<sup>1</sup> In a basic definitional sense resilience is "The action or an act of rebounding or springing back; rebound, recoil.

Elasticity; the power of resuming an original shape or position after compression, bending, etc.

The quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, etc.; robustness; adaptability." (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

It is perhaps unsurprising that in a world of multiple and cascading crises, resilience has become a matter of keen concern and debate. Applied to the properties of physical materials, to the dynamics of species, to ecosystems, to individual and communal experience, to organisations and to nations, resilience appears bonded to notions of security, agency, ethics, adaptability, uncertainty and vulnerability. As philosopher Alice Koubová notes, the question that immediately arises is "which resilience?"<sup>2</sup> David Chandler and Jon Coaffee similarly note the dissensus around the term on "whether it is decentralising and redistributive of agency or maintains current structures of power; whether it opens up possibilities for radical critique and transformation or merely reproduces neoliberal understandings of self-responsibility; whether it is about maintaining stability and the status quo or encouraging risk-taking and change".<sup>3</sup> Resilience is obviously troublingly multivalent, not least because of how it has been co-opted by those keen to undermine structures of collective care and social support. Notably, while debates around definitions, value and practices of resilience are substantially developed in psychology and social work, engineering and ecology, as well as in political science, the concerns around which they revolve rarely intersect with matters of theatre, performance and aesthetics. It is this gap the conference wishes to address.

While remaining alert to the ambivalences of what Liam Jarvis and Karen Savage call "spectacles of resilience",<sup>4</sup> particularly at times of heightened crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, creative resilience merits sustained attention. Creative resilience, we suggest, is inherently performative and relational, immersed in forms of recirculation that are never simply repetitions or recoveries of an original shape, but rather always transforming, adapting and in process.

Our guiding research questions are as follows:

- In what ways does contemporary Anglophone theatre engage with resilience?
- How do plays and performances create spaces for resistance, survival, and hope amidst adversity, whether personal, communal, political or global?
- Does contemporary Anglophone theatre complicate narratives of passivity/agency, vulnerability/agency that adhere to popular neoliberal uses of resilience?
- Are there differences in attitude to the question of resilience in English-language theatre from different cultural and national spaces (Britain, Ireland, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and so on)?

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Rogers, "The Etymology and Genealogy of a Contested Concept," in David Chandler and Jon Coaffee eds. *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience* (Routledge, 2016), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Alice Koubová, "Which Resilience? Thinking Democratic Subjectivity in the Polycrisis," *Filozofia* 79:10 (2024): 1130.

<sup>3</sup> David Chandler and Jon Coaffee, "Introduction," *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience* (Routledge, 2016), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Liam Jarvis and Karen Savage, "Introduction: A 'Postdigital Pandemic'?" *Postdigital Performances of Care: Technology & Pandemic* (London: Methuen Drama, 2023) 4.

- Is it possible to speak of an aesthetics of resilience in twenty-first century theatre/drama?

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Representations, evocations and/or interrogations of resilience/s in contemporary Anglophone playwriting
- Models for resolving conflict and fostering resilience in contemporary Anglophone theatre/drama
- Performance methods for engaging audiences in both confronting and reconciling tensions inherent in society
- Performance, agonism and democracy
- Resilience as care – staging vulnerabilities, staging interconnectedness
- Resisting polarization in the theatre
- Resilience through relationality
- Post-pandemic theatre/drama: practitioners' strategies for maintaining operation.

In accordance with CDE's constitutional policy, papers should deal exclusively with contemporary theatre and drama in English.

**Abstracts:** Abstracts (300 words) for papers proposed (20 minutes maximum delivery time) should be accompanied by a short biographical note, plus full address and institutional affiliation.

**Deadline:** 15 September 2025

**Send to:** [cde2026conference@gmail.com](mailto:cde2026conference@gmail.com)

**Organising team:** Ondřej Pilný, Clare Wallace, Marie Gemrichová, Ondřej Polák and Valeriya Sabitova (Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Faculty of Arts, Charles University)

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Selected papers will be published in a special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* (JCDE). CDE encourages contributions by emerging scholars. Scholars who work on a PhD in the field of contemporary theatre and drama (even if the PhD topic is not related to the conference topic) may apply to the CDE PhD Forum, which will take place on 4 June 2026 at the conference venue. For further information please see <http://contemporary-drama.de/phd-forum/>.

NB: Only paid-up members are eligible to give papers at CDE conferences. Membership subscriptions should be taken out or renewed prior to the conference. For details, please contact CDE's treasurer Martin Riedelsheimer ([martin.riedelsheimer@uni-a.de](mailto:martin.riedelsheimer@uni-a.de)).