

LA COMPAÑÍA PATRÍCIA PARDO (Valencia)

"Socialism should have replaced self-help books but it has not"

THE PATRÍCIA PARDO THEATRE COMPANY IS A SMALL ENSEMBLE BASED IN VALENCIA, SPAIN, ORGANISED AROUND THE CREATIVE PRACTICES OF PERFORMER, WRITER AND DIRECTOR PATRÍCIA PARDO. CHANNELLING A POLITICAL VISION ABOUT HOW THE ARTS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL CHANGE, THE COMPANY CREATES INNOVATIVE, EXPERIMENTAL AND OFTEN CHALLENGING PERFORMANCES.

Patricia Pardo formed her company in 2007, with a view to producing original, innovative and experimental work combining circus, clowning and physical theatre techniques, without and outside of formal theatre constraints. Her work is politically-driven, aiming to challenge heteropatriarchy and social inequality through the arts. As she puts it, 'Socialism should have replaced self-help books but it has not'. It is this political motivation that underpins and drives the work of the company and its response to its context and to public funding.

The mission of the company is to 'create performances with aesthetic and political commitment' and to share these plays with heterogeneous audiences (economically, socially, culturally and geographically speaking). Alongside the development and performance of shows, the company also has a mission to teach theatrical writing, clowning and physical theatre to professionals and amateurs and to promote performing arts as a project of personal and cultural development by raising critical awareness of the reality in which the artistic practice takes place.

The company has two part-time employees working on administration and international touring. Depending on the productions that are in development and the performance schedule, the company variously employs up to eight actors and performers. On average, the company produces one production a year, which shows at various venues in Valencia and tours both nationally and internationally (including Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua and Iceland).

One key partnership is with Espacio Inestable, a theatre venue in Valencia, with which they have residencies and co-produce productions. Also, with over ten years' experience, the company has an established network within the television and education sectors and a strong reputation within their community.

As a small company, it is not easy to sustain, particularly with competing demands on local, regional and national funds. About half the company's budget is sourced from public finances and the other half from private resources. The majority of its public money comes from the city council of Valencia, which is more inclined to see merit in the company's active citizenship and community approach than the national government. It must be remembered that Spain is very centralised and does not have the history of arts and culture funding that Northern or Western Europe has and culture is a very live political issue (note Catalunya and the Basque Country). In this context, Compañía Patricia Pardo's statement that they want to provide people with a moment of beauty, reflection and thought and that access to culture is a right that every citizen should have, takes on new meaning and has loaded political resonance. As a result, the company also sees itself as having a role in challenging the notion and funding of culture at government level and feels that the type of work they are engaged in is a public service, which should be state-supported, or at least receive benefits from the state, for example, in the way it is taxed. A long-term goal for the company is to work towards shaping cultural policy, changing the Spanish government's current approach to culture to one that is more supportive, providing resources and capacity beyond strict business parameters. Compañía Patricia Pardo is not alone in this view and there is a growing community of artists and activists who are looking for governmental policies to change and the company is networked with this movement.

An example of this solidarity is the establishment of the cooperative L'Estiba Cultura, a distribution cooperative to promote and market performance work. This cooperative is made up of four Valencia-based performance companies: Fil d'Arena (dance theatre), La Família Política (theatre), A Tiro Hecho (physical theatre) and Patricia Pardo. L'Estiba Cultura is structured as a cultural association. Its aim is to act as a bridge between the companies and commissioning platforms such as festivals. Each company works with a slightly different art form, although they all share similar socio-political views. There are two functions of this new co-operative. On the one hand, working as a collective drives down the cost of marketing. On the other hand, it realises a shared approach to promotion, as opposed to a competitive stance.

In order to help its members distribute their productions, L'Estiba Cultura established a website and employed a part-time manager, whose salary is paid from a percentage of income from their performances. Together the four organisations can capitalise and build on each organisation's networks. As a group, it is easier for them to work more effectively together, promoting a varied offer to cultural programmers. For the Company, L'Estiba Cultura reduces the administration team's workload. The Company anticipates this distribution channel will open up access to new venues and festivals in Spain and internationally, as well as increasing the Company's visibility with the media and raising incomes. In the first few months, participating in the cooperative resulted in invitations to at least four international festivals that the Company had not previously attended.

The Company is also working with a charity to adapt an existing performance for hearing-impaired audiences. This initiative came from a realisation that there is a group of people that is hardly ever taken into consideration within the context of theatre in Valencia and as a result, has opened up cross-sectoral possibilities. Following a successful premier and positive feedback, they took the show

to an inclusive arts festival in Barcelona and now plan to tour this version in small festivals, both nationally and internationally.

Adapting its work for a different audience has been a learning experience for the organisation. It allowed them to understand the value of starting a dialogue with their target audience at the beginning of the creative process. The resulting production has opened up their work to new audiences, festivals and venues. It has also given them access to new types of grants and increased visibility. For the Company, this experiment has reinforced its artistic voice and shown that new audiences, other languages and other formats can be part of the Company's work.

ASSEMBLING: VALUE IN ARTS ORGANISATIONS

"The notion of value is important for arts organisations"

PATRYCJA KASZYNSKA

This chapter looks at value in arts organisations as a space of agitation, negotiation, and contestation. Arts organisations are in turn presented as sites where different values – and what is known as 'valuation regimes' or 'orders of worth' (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2006) – are constantly played out. The argument is that, rather than a weakness, this 'assembling' might be a key to sustainability in arts organisations and a source of social relevance. Indeed, the suggestion is that the conflict, coexistence and negotiation of different valuing orders in individual organisations is productive in a number of ways: it allows arts and cultural organisations to reflect on their sense of organisational identity; it aids organisational sustainability; it may also be conducive to driving innovation. However, the benefits of 'assembling' do not stop at the organisational level. This essay argues that, looking from a broader perspective, the balancing of different kinds of value and ways of valuing is socially valuable and, indeed, it is yet another reason why the arts and culture matter from the point of view of society at large.

ARTS ORGANISATIONS AND VALUE(S)

The notion of value is important for arts organisations. Arts and cultural organisations produce value. Their outcomes – be they aesthetic, artistic, social, economic, environmental, etc - are valued. Another way of putting this point is to say that these organisations make a difference from the point of view of their audiences, employees, stakeholders, funders, investors, and society at large¹. Furthermore, arts and cultural organisations are also underpinned by value. People who work for and with these organisations have specific value orientations, principles and beliefs.² These are often, but not always, expressed in those organisations' mission and vision statements; sometimes directly - sometimes with a twist – they are reflected in their organisational cultures. Lastly, arts and cultural organisations react and shape external value relations. Individual notions of value and organisational conceptions are juxtaposed with broader ideas of what is valuable, for instance, the value of the cultural sector at

¹ It is worth noting here that we speak of multiple stakeholders and, thus, different valuing relations.

² There is a tendency to assume uniformity with respect to the motivational values in arts organisations but, something we have observed in the context of Creative Lenses is that, practitioners, managers and fundraisers working in the arts can think of value differently. In other words, depending on the job people do, they may have different views and perceptions of values within individual organisations.

