

# Performing arts in the context of Creative Economy in Belo Horizonte

## *As artes cênicas no contexto da Economia Criativa de Belo Horizonte*

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### ABSTRACT

This article is the result of a study on the provision of training in performing arts, specifically in performing arts technologies, in the city of Belo Horizonte, a metropolis that has developed significantly as a hub for event tourism, both business and cultural. Through a bibliographic review, the presence of performing arts among the segments of Creative Economy, a recent area with great economic potential, was confirmed, as well as the importance of creative activities for local and regional development. However, some obstacles to their development in Brazil were identified, among them, the lack of skills and specialized professionals who can expand the economic, social, and cultural results of Brazilian regions. In this sense, and this time through exploratory research, were sought in Belo Horizonte, the existing possibilities for training professionals in performing arts Technologies, understood as planning, conception, design and detailing of configurations, environments, and structures within the scope of performing arts, including lighting, sound, scenography, and costume design projects for theatrical and similar shows. The research confirmed the lack of regular training offers, which suggests the opportunity for proposals in this sense to be made for the benefit of the performing arts, in particular, and creative economy in Belo Horizonte and Minas Gerais in general.

**Keywords:** Training. Belo Horizonte. Creative Economy. Scene technologies. Performing arts.

### RESUMO

O presente artigo resulta de uma pesquisa sobre a oferta de capacitação em artes cênicas, especificamente em tecnologias da cena, na cidade de Belo Horizonte, metrópole que tem se desenvolvido significativamente como polo de turismo de eventos, tanto de negócios quanto culturais. Por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica, confirmou-se a presença das artes cênicas entre os segmentos da Economia Criativa, área recente e de grande potencial econômico, bem como confirmou-se a importância das atividades criativas para os desenvolvimentos local e regional. No entanto, foram identificados alguns entraves para seu desenvolvimento no Brasil, entre eles, a falta de competências e de profissionais especializados que possam ampliar os resultados econômicos, sociais e culturais das regiões brasileiras. Nesse sentido, e dessa vez por meio de pesquisa exploratória, foram buscadas, em Belo Horizonte, as possibilidades existentes de formação de profissionais em tecnologias da cena, entendida esta como planejamento, concepção, projeto e detalhamento de configurações, ambientes e estruturas no âmbito das artes cênicas, compreendendo os projetos de iluminação, sonorização, cenografia e figurino de espetáculos teatrais e afins. A pesquisa confirmou a carência de ofertas regulares de capacitação, o que sugere a oportunidade para que propostas nesse sentido sejam feitas em benefício das artes cênicas, particularmente, e da economia criativa belo-horizontina e mineira de modo geral.

**Palavras-chave:** Capacitação. Belo Horizonte. Economia Criativa. Tecnologias da cena. Artes cênicas.

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Received on: 10/30/2024. Accepted on: 12/19/2024

## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the pursuit of economic alternatives that are not predatory or socially exclusive, studies and research, particularly at the international level, have expanded and deepened, focusing on the economic potential of the so-called “creative industries.” These industries position “creativity as a key factor in establishing commercial relationships, competitiveness, and global economic integration, as the ability to create becomes more important than the production of commodities and industrial products with low added value” (Costa; Souza-Santos, 2011, p. 151).

De Marchi (2014, p. 200-201) clearly summarizes this shift in the discourse on development:

Creative economy is presented as an alternative to a discredited development project based on intense industrialization and the “modernization” of local cultures, which were previously seen as obstacles to the adoption of Western utilitarian reasoning and, consequently, to generating economic growth. Now, developing countries could produce high-value-added goods for export to developed economies, leveraging their cultures (ways of life, artistic and folkloric expressions, imagination, traditional knowledge) without causing harm to their environment.

Reports from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2007) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013) highlighted the growing interest and importance that countries and international entities were placing on what was then referred to as “Creative Economy.” According to Costa and Souza-Santos (2011), in Brazil, following this mobilization, government policies and other organizations turned their attention to the topic. Notable actions include the creation of the Secretariat of Creative Economy within the Ministry of Culture<sup>1</sup>, as well as programs and research developed by entities such as the Institute of Applied Economic Research (*Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* – Ipea), Universidade de São Paulo (USP), the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (*Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas* – Sebrae), the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (*Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social* – BNDES), the Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro (*Federação das Indústrias do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* – Firjan)<sup>2</sup>, and, in the case of Minas Gerais, the P7 Creative Observatory<sup>3</sup>. The Secretariat of Creative Economy was even responsible

1 The Secretariat of Creative Economy was established in 2011 and, over the years, has been dissolved, reinstated, and incorporated into different ministries. Currently, under the name Secretariat of Creative Economy and Cultural Development (*Secretaria de Economia Criativa e Fomento Cultural* – SEFIC), it is one of the ‘Specific Singular Bodies’ of the Ministry of Culture (MinC).

2 In 2008, Firjan took the unprecedented initiative in Brazil to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the sector. Since then, the Creative Industry Mapping has become an important data source and a national and international reference for the industry. In 2022, the 7<sup>th</sup> edition covered the period from 2017 to 2020.

3 P7 Criative Observatory – the Creative Industry Development Agency of Minas Gerais is an independent organization established as a non-profit association, aimed at the development and strengthening of creative economy in Minas Gerais (Observatório P7 Criativo, 2018).

for preparing the Creative Economy Secretariat Plan for the 2011-2014 period, marking “the first time that the narrative of Creative Economy in Brazil was officially declared at the federal government level” (Fleming, 2018, p. 10), thus revealing the strategic value attributed to it.

According to Reis and Marco (2009), Creative Economy is a relatively recent and highly dynamic field, with its concepts, definitions, and terminology still under development. Various expressions are used in discussions on the topic, including cultural economy, experience economy, creative industries, cultural industries, creative cities, creative groups, and the term “creative economy” itself. Debates about its scope are also frequent; however, it is evident that seminal documents, such as the comprehensive report published by the United Nations (UN) in 2010,<sup>4</sup> emphasize the flexibility each country should have in making delimitations based on its own context.

This situation, according to De Marchi (2014), is evident in the Creative Economy Secretariat Plan, which reflects the intention and effort of MinC/SEC to develop its own project or, in the words of the department’s first secretary, Cláudia Leitão:

[...] the concept of Creative Economy that we need to develop in Brazil is not the same as the concept of Creative Industries as defined by the Anglo-Saxons, Australians, Asians, or Americans. We need to consider an economic dynamic involving cultural goods and services based on an understanding of our own diversity, which could serve as an asset for generating wealth for the country (Leitão, 2013, n.p.).

In 2024, Cláudia Leitão reassumed her position and launched the Guidelines for the National Creative Economy Policy – Creative Brazil (*Brasil Criativo*). The department reaffirmed its commitment to adopting an independent policy, emphasizing the need to “decolonize thinking” as a fundamental prerogative. The globally applied terms, definitions, categories, and indicators often fail to account for hybrid cultures. Leitão (2023) argues that it is necessary to challenge the reproduction of hegemonic discourses and construct a distinct, context-specific narrative.

According to the SEC, Creative Economy consists of various groups of enterprises referred to as “creative sectors.” These sectors encompass “all those whose productive activities are primarily driven by a creative act that generates symbolic value, a central element in price formation, and results in the production of cultural and economic wealth” (Brazil, 2011, p. 22).

According to De Marchi (2014), the deliberate use of the term “creative sectors” instead of “creative industries” in the Plan reflects the understanding of its creators that the word “industry” could imply, in Portuguese, the large-scale production of goods — an attribute not applicable to the subject in question. However, the term “creative industries” is widely used in contemporary literature as a replacement for the parallel concept of “cultural industries,” based on the understanding that

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4 This is a document published in 2010 by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), presenting the United Nations’ global perspective on the topic of Creative Economy. It resulted from the cooperative work of multiple agencies.

“creative sectors extend beyond those traditionally classified as cultural, linked to artistic-cultural production (music, dance, theater, opera, circus, painting, photography, cinema), to include other forms of expression and activities related to new media, the content industry, design, and architecture, among others” (Brasil, 2011, p. 22).

The term “cultural industry,” originally coined by philosophers of the Frankfurt School and later expanded by French sociologists to “cultural industries,” remains a subject of debate in academic and legislative discourse (ONU, 2012). According to Wood, Bendassoli, Kirschbaum, and Cunha (2009), these terms, used in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to critique the excessive massification of culture and the arts, carried a negative connotation that does not align with the positive social expectations associated with creative economy. As the authors state, “The change from the term ‘cultural industries’ to ‘creative industries’ reflects a new attempt to integrate the fields of art or culture, technology, and business, this time with the aim of emphasizing the positive aspects of this configuration” (Wood *et al.*, 2009, p. 77).

Despite the existence of various classification models, the performing arts are included in the principal Brazilian documents on Creative Economy, as summarized in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Classification of performing arts within the scope of Creative Economy.

Document	Macro Category	Creative industry
Creative Economy Secretariat Plan 2011	CORE CREATIVE SECTOR Shows and celebrations	ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES <b>Performing Arts</b> Festivals and Fairs Fairs
Mapping of the Creative Industry in Brazil (Firjan, 2022)	CREATIVE AREA Culture	SEGMENTS Cultural expressions Heritage and arts Music <b>Performing arts</b>
P7 Creative Observatory	GROUP Culture	SUBGROUP Cultural heritage Gastronomy <b>Artistic activities</b> (includes performing arts and sound and lighting activities)

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Brasil (2011, p. 28), Firjan (2022, p. 42), and P7 Creative Observatory (2018, p. 66).

Although Creative Economy represents a significant sector of the Brazilian economy, and the country is recognized for its cultural diversity (considered a key driver of creativity), Brazil is not among the leading developing nations exporting creative goods and services (Brasil, 2011; Costa; Souza-Santos, 2011; De Marchi, 2014). The adverse political conditions<sup>5</sup> of the past decade have hin-

<sup>5</sup> Such circumstances are inherent to the dynamics of the political game, including changes in key personnel within government bureaucracy, disputes between departments, the relocation or dissolution of ministries, budgetary constraints, among others (De Marchi, 2014).

dered the establishment of permanent and integrated initiatives, the development of foundational structures, and the formulation of an adequate theoretical model to effectively allocate resources for the sector's growth (Fleming, 2018; Firjan, 2022).

To transform this scenario, Costa and Souza-Santos (2011) and Fleming (2018) align with Leitão (2011), who, in the introduction to the Creative Economy Secretariat Plan, outlines the challenges that must be addressed:

[...] we need research, indicators, and methodologies for the production of reliable data; we require credit lines to foster these enterprises; we lack training for creative skills and infrastructure that ensures the production, circulation, and consumption of creative goods and services, both domestically and internationally. Moreover, it is necessary to advance in the development of new regulatory frameworks, of a tax, labor, civil, administrative, and constitutional nature, that enable progress (Leitão, 2011, p. 15) (emphasis by the authors).

It is evident, therefore, that skill development is a critical requirement for Creative Economy in Brazil. A brief analysis of the Creative Economy Secretariat Plan, a 148-page document, reveals the term "training" appears 24 times, "education" 39 times, and "qualification" 128 times, underscoring the emphasis placed on preparing individuals for creative skills. As Reis and Marco (2009, p. 29) emphasize, "no economic sector can sustain a thriving production without the training of productive agents."

Although this research does not aim to explore the conceptual and metric aspects of Creative Economy in depth, some quantitative data can be presented for illustrative purposes. This serves to confirm its significance within the Brazilian economic landscape and to highlight certain issues related to the performing arts segment, which is the focus of this study.

The most detailed and up-to-date quantitative data come from two sources: the report prepared by the P7 Creative Observatory (2018) and the *Mapping of the Creative Industry in Brazil*, conducted by Firjan (2022). It is important to note that these documents employ different methodologies and cover distinct periods, requiring careful analysis.

The mapping conducted by Firjan covers the period from 2017 to 2020 and takes into account the following aspects:

[...] thirteen creative segments according to their sectoral affinities, identifying four major Creative Areas: Consumption (Design, Architecture, Fashion, and Advertising), Media (Publishing and Audiovisual), Culture (Heritage and Arts, Music, Performing Arts, and Cultural Expressions), and Technology (R&D, Biotechnology, and ICT) (Firjan, 2022, p. 8).

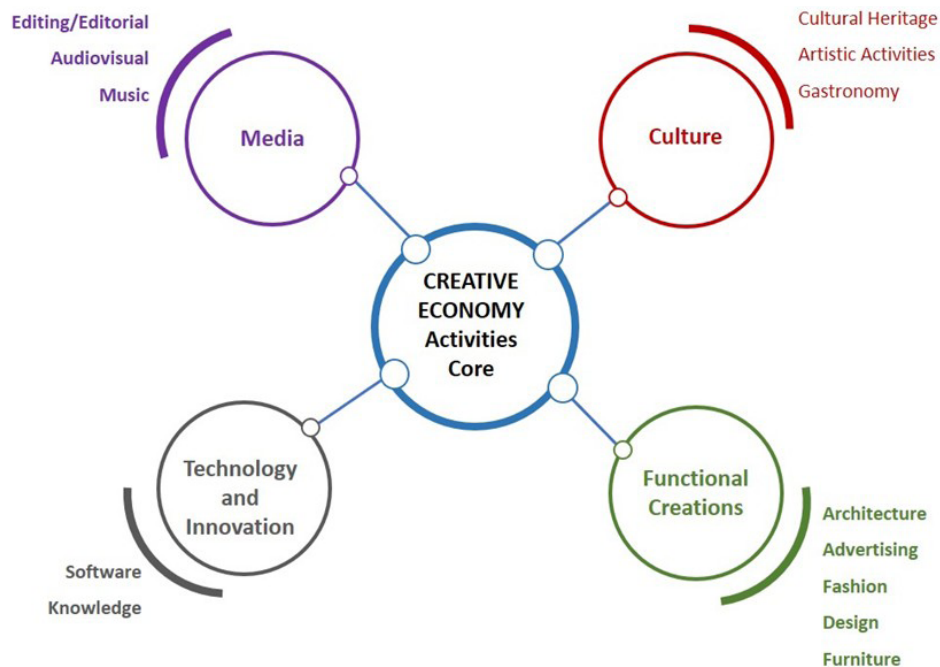
The report highlights a strong performance of the Creative Economy, as shown in the Participation of Creative GDP in the Total Brazilian GDP – 2004 to 2020 (Graphic 1), surpassing the growth recorded for the Brazilian economy as a whole.



Source: Prepared by the authors based on Firjan (2022, p. 13).

Graphic 1. Share of the Creative GDP in the total Brazilian.

Presenting data from 2016, the working group responsible for the P7 Creative Observatory report categorized the creative economy of Minas Gerais into a diagram consisting of four groups and 13 subgroups (Figure 1). This research focuses on the "Culture" group, which encompasses "Artistic Activities" (including the performing arts), "Cultural Heritage," and "Gastronomy."



Source: Prepared by the authors based on P7 Criative Observatory (2018, p. 24).

Figure 1. Diagram of Creative Economy in Minas Gerais: groups and subgroups.

According to the P7 Creative Observatory:

The creative economy employs more than 4.6 million people in Brazil, accounting for 10.1% of the formal jobs registered in the country as of

December 2016. The “Culture” and “Functional Creations” groups are the largest employers, representing 51.3% and 28.4% of total formal creative jobs, followed by “Technology and Innovation” (12.2%) and “Media” (8%).

[...]

In Minas Gerais, creative economy is responsible for generating over 450,000 formal jobs, accounting for 9.89% of the state’s total employment. In the national ranking, Minas Gerais ranks third, with about 10% of the total creative jobs in Brazil.

[...]

The most representative groups in the state in terms of creative job creation are “Culture” (54%) and “Functional Creations” (30.3%). Following them are the “Technology and Innovation” (9.7%) and “Media” (6%) groups (Observatório P7 Criativo, 2018, p. 31, 50 e 51).

These data confirm the significance of Creative Economy for Brazil and highlight the prominent position of the state of Minas Gerais. They also allow for the conclusion that, at least until 2016, the group to which the performing arts belong (Culture) provided a broad job market in terms of creative employment. Regarding employment, a new positive impact was observed: an 11.7% growth compared to 2017, as indicated by the table of employment relationships by creative segment between 2017 and 2020 (Table 1). However, the positive performance was not uniform across all segments: “the Culture and Media segments experienced significant declines, while the Consumption and Technology segments saw an increase in their relative share” (Firjan, 2022, p. 75).

This difference in the performance of creative areas can be attributed to:

[...] The Media and Culture sectors were significantly affected by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to facing institutional challenges related to new legislation and policies from the Brazilian government. The more flexible labor laws, the impact of technology, and new consumption patterns are relevant factors in the outcomes for the Media sector. In the Culture sector, changes to the Federal Law on Cultural Incentives and the restriction of in-person events due to the health crisis contributed to the results (Firjan, 2022, p. 9).

The negative performance of the “Performing Arts” segment in terms of employability, while attributable to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and changes in incentive legislation that have significantly affected the cultural sector, must be analyzed with caution. In the performing arts, “the link to talent can take on very different contractual forms” (Observatório P7 Criativo, 2018, p. 42), which complicates the ability to provide a realistic statistical overview.

The importance of a segment within the context of Creative Economy cannot be solely determined by traditional economic measurement methods, as noted by Jones, Lorenzen, and Sapsed (2015, *apud* Firjan 2022, p. 76-77). The authors contend that each segment of Creative Economy should be analyzed from two

Table 1. Employment relationships.

Segment	Employments			Variation (%)		Composition of creative core (%)		
	2017	2019	2020	2020/2017	2020/2019	2017	2019	2020
<b>Total Labor Market</b>	<b>46,281,590</b>	<b>46,716,492</b>	<b>46,236,176</b>	<b>-0.10</b>	<b>-1.03</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Creative Core</b>	<b>837,206</b>	<b>919,010</b>	<b>935,314</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Culture</b>	<b>64,853</b>	<b>68,423</b>	<b>60,166</b>	<b>-7.2</b>	<b>-12.1</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>
Cultural Expressions	28,403	32,958	30,621	7.8	7.1	3.4	3.6	3.3
Performing Arts	10,802	9,852	7,930	-26.6	-19.5	1.3	1.1	0.8
Music	11,478	11,961	10,369	-9.7	13.3	1.4	1.3	1.1
Heritage and Arts	14,170	13,652	11,246	-20.6	17.6	1.7	1.5	1.2
Technology	310,439	338,053	350,330	12.8	3.6	37.1	36.8	37.5
ICT	123,415	137,695	146,263	18.5	6.2	14.7	15.0	15.6
Biotechnology	31,012	34,880	38,044	22.7	9.1	3.7	3.8	4.1
Research & Development	156,012	165,478	166,023	6.4	0.3	18.6	18	17.8
<b>Consumption</b>	<b>366,352</b>	<b>419,949</b>	<b>439,517</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>47.0</b>
Advertising & Marketing	150,794	199,491	223,497	48.2	12.0	18.0	21.7	23.9
Design	76,090	81,666	81,458	7.1	-0.3	9.1	8.9	8.7
Architecture	94,801	97,317	97,424	2.8	0.1	11.3	10.6	10.4
Fashion	44,667	41,475	37,138	-16.9	-10.5	5.3	4.5	4.0
<b>Media</b>	<b>95,562</b>	<b>92,585</b>	<b>83,301</b>	<b>-10.7</b>	<b>-7.9</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>9.1</b>
Editorial	54,678	51,680	46,815	-14.4	-9.4	6.5	5.6	5.0
Audiovisual	40,884	40,905	38,486	-5.9	-5.9	4.9	4.5	4.1

Source: Firjan (2022, p. 18).

dimensions: “semiotic code” and “material base.” These dimensions refer, respectively, to the symbolic elements of creative production (those that resonate with the emotions of consumers) and the material elements (such as raw materials, technologies, socio-technical production systems, as well as tools, infrastructures, and technological artifacts).

Although the most recent data on the ‘performing arts’ segment does not show significant performance in its tangible aspects (such as the number of jobs, share of GDP, and others), this does not imply that it should be disregarded. The intangible aspects of the products in this segment, for which appropriate metrics are still lacking, embody the identity, cultural, and artistic values of a country. However, the available data can inform and guide public policies aimed at reducing obstacles to the recognition of products in this segment and even in the cultural sector as a whole, which is generally “highly dependent on public resources for the promotion and production of content” (Firjan, 2022, p. 43).

Between 2016 and 2018, the João Pinheiro Foundation (*Fundação João Pinheiro* – FJP) conducted a diagnosis of Creative Economy in Minas Gerais, based on the State Plan for the Creative Economy Seminar held in November 2016. This seminar gathered representatives from various segments to discuss the potential and challenges associated with the development of each sector.



The study, which focused on 10 creative segments — (1) Performing Arts (Theater, Circus, and Dance); (2) Visual and Digital Arts; (3) Design; (4) Book Publishing; (5) Gastronomy; (6) Audiovisual Media (Video and Cinema; Television); (7) Fashion; (8) Music; (9) Heritage and Cultural Expressions; and (10) Software, Applications, and Electronic Games — employed a methodology that included lectures with experts, followed by the application of the SWOT<sup>6</sup> matrix and focus group meetings. The study identified two major obstacles to the development of public policies for the sector: “there is no clarity about the links that comprise the production chain of each segment, and, more critically, there is a lack of systematized data and information about all of them, especially on a quantitative basis” (Carvalho, 2018, p. 6).

This finding, however, did not prevent the completion of a preliminary diagnosis, which identified as a weakness of the “Performing Arts” segment the “lack of investment in the training of theater technicians” (Carvalho, 2018, p. 19). As a strategic guideline, the study recommended “encouraging the training of specialized labor within the theater production chain, including the training of cultural managers and stage technicians” (Carvalho, 2018, p. 22), as “the shortage of qualified professionals at various stages of the production chain is a reality that limits the growth of the sector, particularly cultural managers and technicians in general” (Carvalho, 2018, p. 22).

Therefore, based on the reading and analysis of specific documents, this research concluded that creative economy can contribute to the growth and prosperity of a country or region by promoting economic diversification and building resilience to crises. Similarly, recognizing the performing arts as a sector within Creative Economy suggests that attention should be directed toward addressing any existing obstacles. Among these obstacles, also identified through a state-level diagnosis, is the shortage of qualified professionals, highlighting the importance of proposals that can help mitigate this issue.

## THE SCENIC MARKET IN BELO HORIZONTE

Belo Horizonte, the capital of the state of Minas Gerais, is the sixth most populous municipality in Brazil, the third in the Southeast region, and the largest in its state, according to data from the 2022 Census (IBGE, 2024). Additionally, it serves as the central hub of a complex network of municipalities, exerting economic, political, and sociocultural influence over them.

According to the Belo Horizonte Portal (Belotur, n.d.),<sup>7</sup> Belo Horizonte is “the 3<sup>rd</sup> city in Brazil with the largest number of professionals working in creative activities.” Furthermore, it is highlighted that, according to the Datafolha Institute, it is

6 The acronym SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, or *forças, oportunidades, fraquezas e ameaças* (FOFA) in Portuguese. Available at: <https://asana.com/pt/resources/swot-analysis>. Access on: Feb 13, 2023.

7 Belo Horizonte Portal – The official portal of Belotur, the Municipal Tourism Company of Belo Horizonte S/A, whose mission is to promote the capital of Minas Gerais as a tourist attraction hub with national and international visibility. Available at: <http://portalbelohorizonte.com.br/creativecity>. Access on: Apr 06, 2023.

“the Brazilian capital with the best rates of cultural consumption and attendance at cultural activities.” Similar information is found in the book *Cultura nas Capitais* by João Leiva (2018), in which the author states that, among the 12 capitals surveyed:

Belo Horizonte has the highest levels of access to culture. The capital of Minas Gerais recorded the best attendance percentages over the past twelve months for five cultural activities: music concerts, craft fairs, museums, theaters, and symphonies. In reading, visits to libraries, and poetry gatherings, it achieved the second-highest result (Leiva, 2018, p. 184).

Since 2015, the city has been receiving significant investments from the state government, both for the implementation of actions and for the promotion of discussions that aim to diagnose the demands and potential of the segments within creative economy, which can help expand the city’s presence on national and international stages (Salles, 2022).

The municipal government, despite the changes brought about by political shifts in administration, has also made efforts to support the local creative economy. In October 2019, through the initiative of the Municipal Department of Tourism, and after an application process that had been ongoing since April 2018, Belo Horizonte was recognized as a Creative City of Gastronomy by UNESCO. This recognition made the city part of a creative network, established in 2004, comprising 246 cities with the shared goal of placing cultural industries at the core of their local and regional development plans. The acknowledgment of Gastronomy as a creative activity of excellence has had a ripple effect on other segments that rely on external audiences, helping to strengthen Belo Horizonte in two types of tourism: event tourism and cultural tourism:

The city of Belo Horizonte, capital of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, boasts a rich cultural heritage and a vibrant tourism scene that attracts visitors from various parts of the world. Whether through its historic architecture, distinctive cuisine, or the diversity of cultural events, Belo Horizonte stands out as a constantly growing tourist hub (Vianna; Magalhães; Dolabela, 2024, p. 180).

Belo Horizonte is a city accustomed to hosting a remarkable number of shows throughout the year, including art and culture festivals, as well as numerous national and international artistic events that attract thousands of people, including both artists and spectators (locals and tourists). Some of the most notable local events in the state of Minas Gerais and the country are those organized by the Belo Horizonte Municipal Culture Foundation itself, such as the Belo Horizonte International Stage & Street Theater Festival (*Festival Internacional de Teatro Palco & Rua – FIT-BH*),<sup>8</sup> the *Virada Cultural*,<sup>9</sup> and the Belo Horizonte

8 The Belo Horizonte International Stage & Street Theater Festival (*Festival Internacional de Teatro Palco & Rua de Belo Horizonte – FIT-BH*) was founded in 1994 and has since placed Belo Horizonte on both the national and international cultural circuits of the performing arts. Available at: <http://portalbelohorizonte.com.br/fit>. Access on: Apr 6, 2024.

9 The *Virada Cultural de Belo Horizonte* is a 24-hour uninterrupted journey of artistic and cultural programming across various fields, including music, theater, dance, circus, literature, fine arts, performing arts, visual arts, performance, fashion, and gastronomy. Available at: <https://portalbelohorizonte.com.br/virada>. Access on: Apr 6, 2024.

Black Art Festival (*Festival de Arte Negra de Belo Horizonte – FAN*)<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, there are events organized by independent producers in the city, with or without support from the Municipality's Cultural Incentive Laws, such as the Urban Art Circuit (*Circuito Urbano de Arte – CURA*),<sup>11</sup> Contemporary Art Summer (*Verão Arte Contemporânea – VAC*),<sup>12</sup> the World Circus Festival,<sup>13</sup> and, in particular, the Theater and Dance Popularization Campaign (*Campanha de Popularização do Teatro e Dança – CPTD*),<sup>14</sup> due to the event's longevity, the number of participating shows, and the number of tickets sold (Figure 2).



Source: prepared by the authors based on images collected from the event websites.  
Figure 2. Some events held in Belo Horizonte in 2022 and 2023.

The CPTD is an initiative of the Minas Gerais Performing Arts Producers Union (*Sindicato de Produtores de Artes Cênicas de Minas Gerais – Sinparc-MG*), an organization that aims to develop actions supporting the work of performing arts producers, encompassing various stages of the production chain and making art and culture accessible to the public. In addition to the CPTD, which takes place in Belo Horizonte and several cities in the interior of Minas Gerais at the beginning of the year, Sinparc-MG also runs the “Vá Ao Teatro” (Go to the Theater) portal project and the BH Theater Festival — an annual winter festival. CPTD provides a clear example of the demand for performing arts professionals in general and for stage technologies in particular (Figure 3).

10 The Belo Horizonte Black Art Festival (*Festival de Arte Negra de Belo Horizonte – FAN BH*) is a festival dedicated to the valorization and dissemination of African heritage art. Available at: <https://portalbelohorizonte.com.br/fan>. Access on: Apr 6, 2024.

11 The Urban Art Circuit (*Circuito Urbano de Arte – CURA*) is one of the largest public art festivals in Brazil and has been held in Belo Horizonte since 2017. It is the city's first mural painting circuit. Available at: <https://cura.art/>. Access on: Apr. 6, 2024.

12 The Contemporary Art Summer (*Verão Arte Contemporânea – VAC*) was created with the aim of stimulating and spreading local production in different artistic areas, fostering interaction between artists and the public. Available at: <https://2023.veraoarte.com.br/>. Access on: Apr. 6, 2024.

13 The World Circus Festival has been held in Belo Horizonte and cities in the interior of Minas Gerais since 2001. Its major differentiator lies in the diversity and multiplicity of languages and aesthetics that the circus itself offers. Available at: <https://festivalmundialdecirco.com.br/sobre-o-festival/>. Access on: Apr 6, 2024.

14 The event originated from a national movement that started in Rio de Janeiro in 1972, based on the idea of carioca artists. The following year, it came to Belo Horizonte, having celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019.



Source: Ministério da Cultura (2019, p. 1 and 3).

Figure 3. Cover and index page of the 2019 Campaign folder.

In Belo Horizonte, during the months of January and February, local residents typically left the capital to travel, taking advantage of the school holidays, which led to a reduction in theater attendance. The goal, therefore, was to offer a varied and diverse range of shows, partially reversing this trend and attracting people from nearby municipalities. This approach generated revenue for local businesses and contributed to the economy in general.

In an interview with journalist Soraya Belusi from *Jornal O Tempo*, the president of Sinparc-MG, Rômulo Duque, discussed the transformation in management that the CPTD has undergone over the years. He emphasized that producers rely on the event to generate greater profits from their productions and that people wait for this period to attend the theater. However, Duque also pointed out that it is necessary to invest in other actions to attract spectators throughout the rest of the year (Belusi, 2010).

According to Rezende (2013), over the years, the CPTD has gained increasing experience in developing strategies to attract spectators, implementing numerous changes to the participation notice, marketing methods, and ticket sales. These efforts demonstrate a greater understanding of “[...] what keeps people away from theater and dance as leisure options” (Rezende, 2013, p. 13). The author further adds that “[...] the changes in strategies promoted by the CPTD over time may represent precisely this dialogue that involves the integration of the popular into the market” (Rezende, 2013, p. 13). Additionally, there is a clear effort to break down barriers to accessing cultural services and goods promoted by the event, as “the participation of artists and producers seemed to be fundamental, as they were even involved in ticket sales” (Rezende, 2013, p. 19).

Table 2 presents quantitative data from the CPTD for the period from 2014 to 2024. The significant decline in the number of tickets sold between 2016 and 2023, followed by a slight increase from 2024 onward, does not hinder the intended

analysis, which focuses on the number of productions and, consequently, the number of professionals likely to be in demand. Moreover, ticket sales involve various factors that can, of course, be analyzed by the sector, such as the number and diversity of shows offered, the duration of the campaign, the availability of venues, the quality of re-performances (shows that premiered in the year preceding the event), and promotional strategies, among others. In any case, the CPTD serves as a showcase that quantitatively reflects a significant portion of Belo Horizonte's annual theater production.

Table 2. Number of performances and tickets sold in the Theater and Dance Popularization Campaign 2014-2024.

Year	Premieres	Reprises	Total	Stand-up comedians	Tickets Sold
2024	36	77	113	10	150,242
2023	40	74	114	10	120,734
2022 <sup>15</sup>	25	54	79	19	52,340
2021 <sup>16</sup>	–	–	–	–	–
2020	53	86	139	21	104,981
2019	55	89	144	20	177,886
2018	54	78	132	18	179,132
2017	94	98	192	–	184,607
2016	62	97	159	–	262,801
2015	54	109	163	–	323,601
2014	49	101	150	–	373,324

Source: compiled by the authors from data collected from SINPARC-MG (2024).

As a quantitative test, three specific editions of the CPTD were selected: the most recent (2024); the edition prior to the social isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (2020); and the edition with the highest number of participating shows (2017). Only new productions were considered, as each new stage production not only employs actors and directors but also requires specialized services from designers for scenography, costumes, lighting, and sound effects, as well as prop designers, makeup artists, and other professionals involved in the performing arts production chain.

Considering that each show requires at least one professional designer from each of the technical-creative areas (set, costume, lighting, and sound design), the demand for designers in the CPTD was as follows: in 2024 — with 36 new productions — approximately 144 designers were required; in 2020 — with 53 new productions — the demand reached 212 designers; and in 2017 — with 94 new production — the year with the highest number of new shows; at least 376 professionals were

15 2022: the year of the partial return of CPTD post-Covid-19 pandemic, many theaters did not open as they could not adapt to the health regulations set by the city hall, and several performances were canceled due to contagion within the team.

16 2021: the CPTD was canceled, and SINPARC-MG tried throughout the year to find a new date for the event, but it would only return in 2022.

needed. This represents a significant demand for skilled professionals, aligning with the conclusions and guidelines outlined in documents related to Creative Economy.

The analysis was limited to the shows that participated in the CPTD in recent years. However, theatrical production in Belo Horizonte extends beyond these numbers, as participation in the event is subject to restrictions outlined in the notices. Additionally, many productions may also take part in other events held during the same period, such as VAC, performances outside Belo Horizonte, and specific theater productions for both children and adults. Furthermore, the decline in ticket sales over the past decade may have led some productions to opt out of the CPTD. Despite these considerations, it is essential to recognize that theater remains one of the fields within creative economy with a significant demand for specialized professionals.

Meeting the demand of this job market, however, remains constrained by the shortage of centers or institutions in Brazil, in general, and in Belo Horizonte, in particular, that can provide specialized professionals.

According to Luciani (2014), there is a limited availability of undergraduate programs in Brazil specifically focused on the technical and creative aspects of theater. As a result, design activities for the stage, such as set design, lighting, costume design, and sound design, are often carried out by professionals with diverse educational backgrounds, many of whom are self-taught, having acquired their skills through trial and error or by observing experienced professionals in a master-apprentice system. Luciani (2014) further notes that some bachelor's or licentiate degree programs in acting and directing include courses that introduce students to technical and creative aspects of stage design. However, these courses are not considered sufficient to provide comprehensive training in set, lighting, costume, or sound design.

In Belo Horizonte, there are few institutions that offer regular training for professionals in the field of entertainment technology. The only undergraduate theater program in the city, offered by Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG),<sup>17</sup> provides both a bachelor's degree and a teaching degree in theater. Although the program includes an elective course titled "Lighting Workshop," which introduces the basic technical aspects of stage lighting, as well as another course with variable content covering the practical aspects of technical production for a performance, specialized training in the technical-creative areas (scenography, costume design, lighting design, or sound design) is not part of its pedagogical framework.

An institution that provides opportunities for acquiring both theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of Stage Technologies, though not aimed at training new professionals, is Galpão Cine Horto<sup>18</sup>. This institution offers Research Centers designed to enhance theoretical and practical investigations across various domains of stage creation and culture, fostering exchanges among artists, students,

17 Bachelor's Degree in Theatre – UFMG. Available at: <https://www.eba.ufmg.br/graduacao/teatro/>. Access on: Nov 30, 2024.

18 Research Centers of *Galpão Cine Horto*. Available at <https://galpaocinehorto.com.br/portfolio/nucleos-de-pesquisa/>. Access on Nov 30, 2024.

and researchers under the guidance of professionals active in the cultural sector. Within the field of Stage Technologies, two research centers stand out: one dedicated to Scenography, which serves as a space for theoretical and practical exploration of staging environments, and another focused on Costume Design, which facilitates exchanges and in-depth study of costume design as a creative and sustainable practice, equipping participants with the necessary tools to develop costume projects and concepts.

The Belo Horizonte City Hall, through the Arena da Cultura Free Arts School,<sup>19</sup> offers short-term workshops in specific units, with weekly meetings and introductory sessions for experimenting with behind-the-scenes aspects of the performing arts. Some of these workshops include "The Art of Lights: Lighting Laboratory;" "The art of fashion: costumes as a language of creation;" "Body Museum of Novelties: costumes, fashion, and the world through recycling, customization, and upcycling;" "DJ, Production, and Musical Creation: recording and mixing your sound at home;" "Dressing Spaces: bodies and places on stage;" and the "Scenography and Costume Workshop."<sup>20</sup> However, the program is primarily designed to raise awareness and introduce participants to these fields rather than to provide professional training.

The only institution that offers a regular course is the Clóvis Salgado Foundation, through the Artistic and Technical Training Center (*Centro de Formação Artística e Técnica* – CEFART) at the School of Stage Technology,<sup>21</sup> created in 2017. Its objective is to provide training to students through courses that address the processes inherent to the production, assembly, and operation of technological resources for the artistic scene. However, it does not focus on the creation of scenography, costumes, lighting, or sound design.

There are four Continuing Education Courses (FIC) that aim to promote the initial training of future professionals:

- Stage Technician Assistant: with specific training based on the basic foundations of scenography and technical support for costumes and setting up stage spaces in contemporary times.
- Costume designer: with specific training based on the basic fundamentals for composing sketches, cleaning, storing, and maintaining costumes.
- Stage Lighting Technician: for future professionals who will work as lighting technicians.
- Sound technician: with basic fundamentals for composing soundtracks, for recording, mixing, assembly/disassembly, and sound engineering operations.

19 *Escola Livre De Artes Arena da Cultura* Available at <https://prefeitura.pbh.gov.br/fundacao-municipal-de-cultura/escola-livre-de-artes> Access on Nov 30, 2024.

20 Free translation of the original titles in Portuguese: "A arte das luzes: Laboratório em Iluminação;" "A arte da moda: o figurino como linguagem de criação;" "Corpo Museu de novidades: figurino, moda e mundo através da reciclagem, customização e upcycling;" "Dj, Produção e Criação Musical: gravando e mixando o seu som em casa;" "Vestindo espaços: corpos e lugares em cena;" and "Oficina de Cenografia e Figurino."

21 *Fundação Clóvis Salgado*. Available at: <https://fcs.art.br/processo-seletivo-de-novos-estudantes-cursos-regulares-do-cefart-01-2025/>



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of this article was to present the results of a bibliographical research, conducted on publications related to Creative Economy, and exploratory research carried out in the city of Belo Horizonte. The aim was to justify the mobilization of the academic field to offer greater opportunities for training in stage technology — a set of expertise that, behind the scenes, ensures the production of a show — including scenography, costumes, lighting, and sound design/sound engineering.

The choice of publications related to Creative Economy was not random, as it is currently considered an important area of the Brazilian economy, to which stage technologies belong. This inclusion can be found in the segments of "Performing Arts" (Creative Economy Secretariat Plan), "Scenic Arts" (*Mapeamento da Indústria Criativa no Brasil* – Firjan, 2022), or "Artistic Activities" (P7 Creative Observatory). The information obtained confirms that, in general, there is a lack of creative skills that could expand the economic, social, and cultural outcomes in Brazilian regions. One of the biggest obstacles to the development of these segments is the shortage of specialized professionals.

The choice of Belo Horizonte is justified by its status as an active city that hosts a large number of shows and numerous national and international events. It was therefore strategic to analyze the city's potential for professional development. Simultaneously, the research aimed to identify the existing supply of professional training methods offered regularly in the city, whether by educational institutions or research centers and groups.

To exemplify the existing demand, an analysis was conducted on quantitative data from a regular and highly significant event in the capital of Minas Gerais, the CPTD. This analysis examined the production of a substantial number of new shows in each edition, representing a sample of the city's annual theatrical output, and estimated the basic demand for professionals responsible for scenographic, costume, lighting, and sound design projects. The findings indicate a clear demand for professionals in the sector and highlight the need for specialized workforce training in the techno-creative areas, not only for theater but also for other segments that require expertise in Stage Technologies, which are also linked to the Creative Economy as a whole.

With the implementation of public policies within the scope of the 15 Guidelines of the Creative Brazil program, launched by Cláudia Leitão (Brasil, 2024), several align with the present research. Notably, Guideline 1 promotes the production and dissemination of studies and research on the Brazilian creative economy; Guideline 2 focuses on training entrepreneurs, managers, and workers in Brazilian culture and creative economy; and Guidelines 8 and 9 aim to encourage employment and income generation, as well as the productive inclusion of entrepreneurs, managers, and workers in Brazilian culture and creative economy.



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**Conflict of interests:** nothing to declare – **Financial support:** none.

**Authors' contributions:** Silveira, Y. S.: Investigation, Writing – Original Draft. Safar, G. H.: Data Curation, Formal Analysis. Dias, M. R. Á. C.: Methodology, Supervision.

