

BUDAPEST 2016

« Car le vrai rôle d'un festival est d'aider les
artistes à oser, à entreprendre des projets... »
Bernard Faivre d'Arcier

Atelier for Young Festival Managers

2 - 8 June 2016

Inge Ceustermans

Managing Director The Festival Academy

Opening Ceremony of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers BUDAPEST 2016

2 June 2016, Budapest, Hungary

Dear Csaba Káel,
Dear Agnes Havas,
Dear Honorary guests,
Dear Partners,
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to give a very special welcome to the mentors and to the participants taking part in the Atelier Budapest. You find yourselves amongst 43 young festival managers from 25 countries and 4 continents – representing an enormous pool of wisdom. I also welcome you in the name of Mr. Darko Brlek, President of The Festival Academy and the European Festivals Association (EFA) and Director of the Ljubljana Festival, and Ms. Kathrin Deventer, Secretary General of EFA, who deeply regret that they cannot be here and who have asked me to extend their words of welcome to you.

We are delighted that our partner in Budapest, the Armel Opera Festival, is hosting this Atelier. Together, we have prepared an inspiring programme.

We are celebrating this year 10 years of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers. Where do we stand today? 10 editions and 357 festival managers from 65 countries and all continents and more than 40 renowned festival directors participated and global alliances have been created. The Festival Academy, a young organisation set up by EFA in 2012 to run this training programme. An upcoming publication which gathers material from presentations and texts by both presenters and alumni of the past ten years and two new train programmes 'Festival Production Management Training' and 'Festival Readings' that have been launched in 2016 and 2014 and a lot of exciting plans for the future.

Budapest is the 10th edition after the Atelier started in 2006 and the fifth Atelier to take place under The Festival Academy. We gather all here today in Budapest, Hungary, in the centre of Europe.

Europe seems to be in a constant state of chaos today and its identity is continuously put into question. Is Europe only an aggregate of separated national identities? Or a mix of a set of different individuals and religions that interact freely? The new democracy in Europe is referenda, where a minority of the people take part in of which a majority votes against the EU, as in the Netherlands recently and the upcoming referenda in the UK and Hungary to name only a few. The new democracy in Europe is where politicians create Euroscepticism in their population instead of defending the European Union's values, where successes are celebrated as national achievements and failures are the fault of the European Union.

Gerard Mortier, who sadly is no longer with us but who was one of the important mentors in the past Ateliers, said in his speech at the closing of the Ljubljana Atelier:

'People say "But Europe will not work". There are only 50 years of Europe and we are still fighting to realise the Human Rights, already for two hundred years. So I think we should not be too nervous, we should be patient and know that Europe will be the continent of the future. So let us, who are working in Arts, let's see these challenges as something very positive. It is only out of chaos that you can create a cosmos. Without chaos there is no cosmos. And we are at the moment living a part of that chaos. So I think it is a positive view we have to develop and to present in our programmes.'

I would like to follow Gerard Mortier in his positive image of Europe and I think we all have a responsibility in this as festival managers but first and foremost as people.

In Brussels, the commissioner of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Tibor Navracsics, and Federica Mogherini; the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, are currently joining forces to put culture at the core not only of the cultural policy but also at the core of the foreign policy of the EU. This is a new concept and a very important signal to the EU and the world.

While the member states are bickering over the every-day crisis agenda and the current chaotic foreign policy rules the EU, both Navracsics and Mogherini are aware we need creativity and diplomacy in so many ways these days. And, more importantly, that culture can play an important role in this.

Federica Mogherini was present at the EU culture forum this year in Brussels to present this strategy for cultural diplomacy and I would like to quote her. She said:

'Almost 25 years ago some were convinced that we were standing before a clash of civilization, we were told that wars would be fought because of religion and culture. I believe there is no clash of civilization and that wars are still being fought for the same old reasons, very traditional ones: economic interest, natural resources, spheres of influence and power. All very old roots of conflict. It is true that there are cultural clashes but not between, but more and more inside of each of our civilisations. Culture can be the place where people meet and make the most of their diversity. Not isolation but openness is what made Europe such an incredible place and project.'

And by the way, if you want to define European culture, it is almost impossible – but that is a good thing! European Culture is about diversity, diversity of thought, diversity of backgrounds, and diversity of religion. Creativity in Europe is what happens when these come in contact with one another – providing inspiration or even confrontation. It has always been like this as cultures moved and thrived across the continent and we should work to make sure it can continue.

Both Mogherini and Navracsics have understood that Europe not only needs to be united but that it needs to engage with the world to face the global challenges of today, for one to prevent radicalization. Therefore, they are developing this strategy for cultural diplomacy in the EU external relations.

Of course cultural diplomacy should not be “using culture for diplomatic reasons”. Culture is not a neutral term, concept or phenomenon that works or can be applied only in the best interests of human, social and economic development. Culture has also been used to exclude people as for example the colonial and apartheid projects used culture and cultural differences as means to divide and rule African people. It’s also important to understand the unequal power relations between those who have and make available the resources to devise and implement policies and strategies and those who are intended to benefit from such policies.

Therefore, I hope that the European Commission in developing their strategy will go and look at the field to see what is already happening on this level and what so many of us are already doing: creating global alliances and understanding in the work we do.

But at the same time, and I want to underline this, what Navracsics as a Hungarian EU commissioner and Mogherini are doing stands in a sharp contrast to the current political policy in some countries in Europe today.

I think that more than ever networks are important – it is the meeting of people which can create better understanding and alliances, which can take away fear. The courage Bernard Faivre d’Arcier, who will be with us in the next days, is referring to in his quote and motto of The Festival Academy *‘The true role of a festival is to help artists to dare, to engage in new projects’* is not only limited to daring the artists but also to dare ourselves, to take a stand in the current developments that threaten our freedom because of fear, our values, and to use a big word “world peace”.

Therefore we are so happy that we have here today with us 43 people from 25 countries, and that we bring together Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists etc.; lesbians, gays, heterosexuals; people from film, literature, dance, music, theatre; people from Australia, the Arab countries (Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Iran, Lebanon), China, the US, South America (with Mexico), South-Korea, Singapore, many European countries (as France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Portugal, Iceland, Malta, the UK, Slovenia, Sweden) and even as far as New-Zealand and renowned festival directors with Rania Elias from Palestine, Agnes Havas from Hungary, Rose Fenton and Jonathan Mills from the UK, Nele Hertling from Germany, Bernard Faivre d’Arcier from France and Michał Merczyński from Poland. On top you will be immersed in the local cultural scene of Hungary and you will meet many players from Budapest. And this all under the coordination of Hugo De Greef, who I would like to thank especially for his 10-year investment in guiding these Ateliers.

We are of course disappointed that two of our participants, Sepehr Sharifzadeh from Iran, and Aysha Al Sadeh from Bahrain did not make it to Budapest for different reasons. Our participant from Iran, because his visa was refused by the Hungarian Embassy for reasons we don’t know. It is a missed opportunity, especially today when it’s even more important that they would be here to give a face to the many people from the Arab countries who are just people like us, struggling day-to-day for their human rights, being confronted with acts of terrorism just like us, and with the many refugees who try to find shelter in a safer place. We of course don’t know why he has been refused to travel to Budapest. But I do know he will be next month at the Sibiu Arts Festival for which he did obtain a national visa to Romania. I imagine it is getting more and more difficult these days to get a Schengen visa. We tend to forget how privileged we are to travel so freely in the EU thanks to this agreement which is currently under pressure. We cannot give up these freedoms out of fear.

Therefore, I invite you all to profit as much as possible from this experience. To listen and try to understand the other, to create mutual understanding and to foster alliances which will last longer than these 7 days. The Festival Academy is a small step towards the breaking out of known patterns, the ‘us knows us’. You are given a platform to meet and to make connections with a diversity of creative minds. Don’t be afraid but have courage and do the same in your festivals. You have the power to change something as well. You are the festival leaders

who will define the landscape in the next decade. I suggest all 43 of you start with inviting our participants from Iran and Bahrain to your festivals that would be a good start to make a difference!

Be self-critical, be open and ready to share, mould these 7 days into what you want to discuss... What are your topics? What are your questions? Doubts? What are your daily struggles? Be honest. Be modest. Don't only share your successes but let others learn from your failures. The mentors are there for you, they will guide you but they will also respect you and give you the freedom to make this your atelier. It is your working space, you also have a responsibility in this and you will need to engage yourself to direct this atelier in the way you want.

As one of the participants said, it is truly unique that the atelier is a space where so much experience and knowledge comes together. You can learn skills, people management, making budgets in other programmes. That's not why you are here. You are here to reflect on the role of festivals today, in a society in transition. You are here to reflect on the ways how to deal with this transition. You are here to identify the right questions. You might find answers, but you might also go home with many more questions. You are here to get inspired and to make alliances beyond these 7 days and to put some stones for the future.

As a conclusion I would like to thank once more our host, the Arnel Opera Festival, our partners British Council, the French Institute, the Flemish Delegation in Hungary and the many cultural venues in Budapest, as Müpa tonight, that will open their doors for us in the coming days.

**THE
FESTIVAL
ACADEMY**

The Festival Academy
Saintelettesquare 17 | 1000 Brussel | Belgium
Tel: +32 2 644 48 00 | info@TheFestivalAcademy.eu
www.TheFestivalAcademy.eu | www.efa-aef.eu



The Festival Academy is an initiative of the European Festivals Association

Host and co-organisers



EFA's Structural Partners



Partners



Support of participants

