

Atelier for Young Festival Managers

Beirut, 21 - 27 March 2015

Speech by Nora Joumblatt, President Beiteddine Art Festival, at the occasion of the opening of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers in Beirut

Good evening everyone, your Excellencies, dear honorary guests, mentors and Atelier participants, and my very dear colleagues in the Arts.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you – on behalf of the Beiteddine Art Festival, to the 8th edition of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers.

It is the first time that this unique 7-day training takes place in the Arab world and we are very honoured to have the opportunity to host it in Beirut.

Though one of the smallest countries in the Middle East, Lebanon enjoys an extraordinary rich and diverse human and cultural heritage, it prides itself with the first major festival in the region as well as the largest number of international festivals besides numerous awesome cultural venues.

Beirut, the capital city, is at the crossroads between East and West. It was reborn seven times from its ashes. This resilient capital is an Arab metropolis with all the flavours of a contemporary European city. We invite you to enjoy and discover Beirut, a vibrant city that fascinates with its cultural dynamism; it is an ideal backdrop for the Atelier.

In a fast changing world, a globalised world, the festival sector faces new challenges that the coming generations of festival directors and cultural professionals have to meet, exploring innovative cultural pathways and engaging in international networking.

We strongly believe that festivals are perfect transnational players. Collaboration amongst festivals is essential; together we can share information, create connections and stimulate artistic creativity. We can question and re-imagine our societies, ensuring the free flow of ideas.

In this context, initiatives such as the Atelier for Young Festival Managers are crucial. It is one of a few programmes in the world creating opportunities, allowing next generations of festival makers and programmers to network and be inspired by an amazing group of experienced festival directors.

The Beiteddine Art Festival, born 30 years ago at a time when the civil war was tearing the country apart, made it against all odds and is today one of the leading festivals in the Middle East. The Festival is delighted to support The Festival Academy and the European Festivals Association in its didactic mission. Our thanks go to its President Darko Brlek, the Secretary General Kathrin Deventer, as well as my friend Hugo De Greef who has been guiding the Atelier since its beginnings and of course to the Managing Director of the Atelier, Inge Ceustermans.

We invite all participants, presenters and guests to benefit as much as possible from this Atelier and this incredible network you will now be part of.

We are convinced that everyone will leave Beirut with many new ideas, creative intentions and innovative projects.

May this edition be a memorable one! Welcome to Beirut.