

Atelier for Young Festival Managers 3-10 April 2014

Atelier for Young Festival Managers EDINBURGH 2014

Speech by Kathrin Deventer

Secretary General of the European Festivals Association (EFA)

Opening, 3 April 2014, Edinburgh, UK

Dear Mrs Aitken, Mrs Mackenzie-Stuart, Dear Jonathan, Hugo, Nele, Dear Joe Melillo,
My dear fellow Atelier participants,

...numbers 172 – 224! Yes! These are numbers of the Atelier participants, all in all 172 Atelier Alumni so far who will be joined by the participants of this edition of EFA's Atelier for Young Festival Managers here in Edinburgh.

- Numbers that we counted until today since Görlitz in 2006 when we organised the Atelier for the first time.
- Numbers that we are communicating to the European Commission when we are asked to justify the impact, the sustainability of the Atelier programme, its outreach and relevance in relation to the objectives of the European Union's cultural programmes.

And we tell them that you, the Edinburgh participants, come from 28 countries and regions worldwide, from 5 continents, that you are 18 men and 34 women, with an average age of 32.

We tell them that the Atelier provides for intercultural dialogue, for peer-to-peer learning, high-level training, mentoring, and that it is a potential platform for growth and jobs.

These are numbers, just numbers, and these are criteria we tick.

Do they tell the story? The real story behind, and inside the Atelier?

No. What the Atelier really is about cannot be put in any application form, or into words. It has to be lived!

But let me try to put it into *my* words.

For me, the Atelier for Young Festival Managers is a moment; a magical moment of 7 days; a moment of generosity, of sharing, of inspiration, of friendship, of trust and fellowship.

It is a moment of total openness, of embracing the other, of curiosity, of discovering what is at stake in festivals, in your work, in your contexts, in your lives.

It is a moment to speak about our dreams and visions, and about actions we want to take to make our dreams and visions come true! You put them all in a paper which we will discuss throughout the 7 days.

It is a moment of surprises, of confrontation, of controversy, of radically different perspectives, of exchanging challenges each of you is facing, of overcoming one's own limits and visions; of opportunities to share our ideas, our perception of festivals, and our role in society, at a given time, in a given space in this world.

That sounds big. And I think no matter how limited our role might be in this world, it is a big one.

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes YOU come alive; because what the WORLD needs is people who came alive! Or what one of you posted today, which we really like: If you don't design the future, someone else will!

The Atelier definitely is a lively format that allows us to question and to listen.

Edinburgh, with its Edinburgh International Festival, is a fantastic playing field for that: the Festival city, a small city, big in arts and culture, with the Edinburgh International Festival as one of the main events since 1947.

During the month of August, the Festival puts people's minds into another perspective; it transforms citizens for 3 weeks into other personalities. Throughout these seven days and in particular on our cultural visits (day 5), we will have the chance to discover this city, its festivals, its venues, the impact of arts and cultural houses.

As I said: the Atelier is a moment of true and deep exchange. A great space of energy – offered by you, by the stories you tell, and by the experiences of 9 mentors and presenters we will listen to, guided by Hugo De Greef, who has been the Atelier's coordinator since the very beginning, and Nele Hertling, who attended every single Atelier as a mentor.

And I can tell you: energy is contagious!

Are we all ready to get contagious? To step out of our daily routine? Are we ready to view and review our values that drive our actions?

Because despite all the seemingly marginality of values and dreams, and our convictions: they guide all, all our actions!

Let me conclude by referring to the motto of the Atelier given by Bernard Faivre d'Arcier who will join us later this week: "The true role of a festival is to help artists to dare, to engage in new projects."

Yes, the arts are omnipresent; and festivals serve this feeling of omnipresence in us, of infinity in a way, of losing ourselves in moments, that can be so absolute, eternal for a while. We all know this feeling.

We all live to live, and to die. Everything happens in this eternal infinite flow of time that is for each of us limited: let's take, let's shape, let's enjoy our moment. Let's emerge in it, and give and take as much as we can throughout these 7 days!

And I will make sure that at the end of 7 days I will have collected enough facts and figures and measurable outputs to tell the European Commission more about the value of the Atelier, for growth, for jobs, for the economy etc.; and above all, I will tell them: for 52 young festival makers who shared their dreams and are ready to act, to dare, to fail, to risk.

My motto of the week: SHARING is CARING. ENERGY is CONTAGIOUS. The FUTURE is NOW.

I give the floor to Sir Jonathan Mills, Director of the Edinburgh International Festival, and I would like to thank him, Joanna Baker, Katie and the EIF team, also on behalf of EFA President Darko Brlek and the Atelier team, Inge and Lore, for a great collaboration and for hosting this Atelier here in Edinburgh, as well as Joe Melillo for his keynote speech tonight.

Thank you very much for your attention.