

POZNAN 2014

« 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 20 - 27 October 2014

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Speech by Kathrin Deventer

Secretary General of the European Festivals Association (EFA)

Opening Ceremony, 20 October 2014, Poznan, Poland

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening dear participants of the Atelier Poznan 2014, this fantastic city in autumn colours!

Good evening to our host, the city of Poznan, the Malta Foundation and the Zamek Culture Centre where we will spend a considerable amount of our time in the next 7 days together, our Atelier Home.

Thank you for this wonderful introduction, Professor Limon!

I never directed a festival. I started my life with parents making a lot of music at home. I made a lot of music at home. I don't know how it happened and it happens with people, but I lost this creative expression when I grew up and I ended up working very early for EFA, the European Festivals Association.

I became its Secretary General in 2008; and I learned to understand institutions. I learned to understand and shape strategies. I learned to understand power, relations, diplomacy. And I was able in my context, with many people supporting me, to shape EFA and its projects; wonderful and fantastic learning experience.

But what happened to the child that was playing and surrounded by music?

I don't know when and why but at a certain point in my life, recently, I found this 'I' that once was so lively. I started feeling me; and speaking about the "I"; the subject, the actor. Me, the creative subject, the political subject. The authentic subject, self-aware; not just striving for the 'thing', but that acts, smells, feels, listens to real life. I started feeling self-full, not self-ish but full of myself: aware of the freedom I have and I need, knowing that this freedom bears a lot of responsibility. I felt this 'I' that makes choices; an I that makes priorities; an I that takes decisions; that directs others and chooses to be directed by others; an I that lives in a space of responsibility: my space is a space of responsibility; of integrity and of passion that has many implications on others; an I that has to ensure the quality, the content of things. That's why I need to make choices and I need to trust me – if it's not good for me, it's not for others. If we don't design the content, someone else will!

That is the Atelier, and that by the way is a festival I think as well: a space of freedom where we can go back for 7 days to the 'I'; to the subject that shapes, that creates, that makes choices, that carries so much responsibility. We can go back to that child in a way that looks into the mirror that listens to

the other and understands better him or herself; that feels, that smells, that tastes...and we can grow with the others, listening to their contexts, our festivals.

This Atelier is not about the institutions; it is not about the money in festivals; it is not about management in the academic sense: It is about you who need to be so self-aware to act in all these fields. It is about you who need to make choices. It is about your intentions that are followed by the action. Intentions are the soul; the source, the driver of my acts: so we speak about your intentions. Why do you make festivals? What keeps you awake? You all who have 7 days to open yourself, to discuss the topics, your atelier topics, questions and obstacles from a very personal point of view. That is quite a journey I believe: with 41 different people, from totally different backgrounds, with totally different kinds of festivals. Only when we are all together generous and open enough for this journey, it will be an extremely wonderful experience as it was for 223 Atelier alumni before you in the 6 editions in Goerlitz, Varna, Singapore, Izmir, Ljubljana and Edinburgh.

The world is moving so fast and it is moving sometimes into weird directions; looking at the news, listening to friends around the world. People are directed into wrong directions with fear through the power of manipulation. They are kept asleep for and in the interest of a few. And at the end, they forget what holds us together; they only think about what divides us, about what it is that makes us kill each other and not care for each other. Running in the beautiful autumn leaves this morning, I discovered the graveyard of soldiers who died in World War I and II and there it was: this human nature killing itself - what a shame.

So maybe this Atelier is doing the opposite with us: it is taking time; it is slowing down. It is bringing us to the essential, to humanity and to the essential question: why do we make festivals; what for? It is preparing us not to react to the speed, not to react to the bad in this world, but to offer the good...to act in our festivals, to shape time, take time, to shape a festival which in itself is a space of time; a space of utopia embedded, but at the same time unrelated to the speed of life. The Atelier is for people, who come to have a conversation with each other; who want to listen, really listen. 6 mentors and presenters, and with Hugo De Greef, the Atelier coordinator, and Nele Hertling, we have the two best listeners here who will guide you throughout these 7 days, together with Bernard Faivre d'Arquier, Michal Merczynski, Robyn Archer and more guest speakers.

And we have Mark Ball as our first keynote speaker here tonight, who is prepared to speak to you about his way to involve people into his festival, the LIFT festival and create magical places where the arts meet the audiences. I believe that energy is contagious; SHARING is CARING and that the FUTURE is NOW.

Maybe I will be a participant in one of the Atelier editions to come, in South Korea or in Beirut...when I keep the child in myself, and at the same time grow up further, and I feel that I have something to say like all of you have. For now, I am looking forward to Mark Ball and wish us all an inspiring 7 days together.