

Chemnitz
European Capital
of Culture

2025

THE
FESTIVAL
ACADEMY

20 - 26 NOV 2025 - GERMANY

Atelier for Young Festival Managers

Chemnitz 2025

Programme

Pillars

1. Festivals as agents for social change – the transformative power of art.
2. Radically imagining new narratives (of regions, continents, etc.) and strengthening communities.
3. Actions towards the realization of a vision: practice and behaviour. Embodied re-imagining how and why we do things, for who and with who and how we exist within this world as human beings first and as part of a common humanity.
4. Connection beyond networking – in depth connection sharing our diverse stories (both personal and professional), practicing active listening both through our minds and bodies generating empathy based on human connection.

The purpose of our gathering

1. To create a platform where all voices, contexts, stories, and realities can be heard; to connect as human beings, peer-to-peer, eye-to-eye; to identify what we have in common, rather than what divides us; to recognize our collective pain in turbulent times, resulting from inequalities, conflict, climate threats, social injustice, etc. around the world.
2. To experience joy – to celebrate and enjoy our humanity together, and to share, play, learn, listen, engage and relax together. To reach a state where we can see our own challenges and context through the eyes of another.
3. To awaken our creative power, curiosity, and radical imagination, inspiring and being inspired - to transform and broaden our perspectives, methods, and habits (how we do things) and our human experience (how we exist).
4. To create a long lasting and meaningful festival community of friends who are empowered and have gained tools to act both individually and collectively in response to the main issues of our times; who can set up new collaborations and new models of cooperation together; and who can go back to their context and make positive changes in their festival creation and face their challenges with more courage and strength.
5. To witness and experience the IDEA- International Dance Encounter Amman and to get to know the sociopolitical and cultural context of Jordan, as well as to connect with festivals, cultural professionals, and artists from the region.

Objectives

1. Explore the relationship of a festival maker, reflect on their values and purpose with festival making and the world at large and in relation to the other participants.
2. Gain new perspectives, explore the essence of the why and how of festivals in a global context, share and exchange experiences and reflect on the topics that concern the participant cohort.
3. Meet and network with festival makers from across the globe.
4. Reflect on the role of festivals in society, explore the power of festivals and critical global concerns of our time including, during and in the aftermath of conflict.

Atelier Outcomes

By the end of the Atelier, participants will be able to:

1. Have formed deeper bonds and relationships with the cohort and gained a deeper understanding of the local cultural context of the Atelier host cities.
2. Gained knowledge and skills needed to manage their festivals and initiatives better
3. Better understanding of multiple perspectives that exist
4. Have had deep, open, and authentic discussions around global challenges and the role of festivals.
5. Gained training around specific sustainable strategies, specifically strategic partnerships, and funding mechanisms and fundraising.

Formats

The Atelier uses interactive formats (facilitated and focused interactive dialogue, games, rituals, immersion, bodywork to engage participants, experts, and mentors equally in the conversations and dialogues.

Vision & Mission The Festival Academy

The Festival Academy envisions a world where all people regardless race, gender, social background, sexual orientation can equally enjoy and participate in cultural life and festivals; where festivals can reflect - through incorporating human rights values - the real world experience of all of us, furthering social and economic justice and human dignity and catalyzing positive change on a local, regional, national and even global level.

We enable and facilitate a global inclusive conversation and critical reflection between festival managers from different art disciplines, origins, generations and social backgrounds on the role that arts, culture and more particularly festivals, can play in a fast changing world.

Pool of experts

Programme development, facilitation and mentoring

- **Alia Alzougbi** – Artistic Director and CEO of Shubbak Festival London – Lebanon / UK
- **Vigdís Jakobsdóttir** – Cultural Strategist, Theater Director and former Artistic Director of Reykjavík Arts Festival – Iceland
- **Nástio Mosquito** – Multimedia artist and elucidator – Angola
- **Inge Ceustermans** – General Director The Festival Academy – Belgium

Mentors

- **Kelsa Trom** – Senior Program Manager - Science, Society & Culture Simons Foundation – United States
- **Keng Sen** – Artistic Director of Singapore's T:>Works – Singapore
- **Roni Isola** – Cultural manager, producer and curator of performing arts (FIBA, CCBorges, Artlab) – Argentina

Theater der Welt 2026 - Co-curators

- **Aya Nabulsi** - Producer and Programmer at Ithra Theatre - Jordan/ Saudi Arabia
- **Faye Kabali-Kagwa** - Project Coordinator at Assitej South Africa - South Africa
- **Joshua Dalledonne** - Associate Director of Creative at Arts Commons / Weklund Centre - Canada
- **Mané Touré** - Director of Festival Bideew - Senegal
- **Nikos Mavrakis** - Founder and Director of TooFarEast - Greece
- **Rodrigo Gonzalez Alvarado** - Curator Mercado/FIBA Buenos Aires - Colombia/ Argentina
- **Simon Abrahams** - Creative Director and CEO of Melbourne Fringe Festival - Australia
- **Srishti Ray** - Associate Producer at QTP Entertainment andThespo Festival - India
- **Yuan Zhang** - Curator and Producer of contemporary performing arts - China

Chemnitz Cultural programme

- **Arba Manillah** - Musician and songwriter - Tanzania / Germany
- **Nadine Knödler** - Lehngericht Augustusburg - Germany

European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025

- **Stefan Schmidtke** – Managing Director Programming – Germany
- **Paul Viebeg** – Production – Germany
- **Susanne Berthold** – Production – Germany
- **Pascal Anselmi** – Program Manager – Germany

The Festival Academy

- **Inge Ceustermans** – General Director – Belgium
- **Mar Sebastià Casanova** – Project Manager – Spain
- **Fabiola Eidloth** – Content and Community Development, New Initiatives – Germany / Belgium
- **Edgar Prusaczyk** – Project Manager Assistant – Ukraine / Poland / Spain

Programme

DAY ONE: Thursday, 20 November

Experts present: Vigdís, Nástio, Inge, Kelsa and Roni

12:00 – 13:00 Registration and snacks

Location: Schmidtbank

13:00 – 13:30 Introductory session: *Where are we?*

- Getting to know the local context
- Welcome by The Festival Academy and European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025
- Introduction to the arts in Chemnitz and Saxony

13:30 – 16:30 Introductory session: *Who are we?*

- Introduction of the Atelier purpose, format and schedule
- Introduction of facilitators, mentors, speakers and team
- Informal mapping of the group

16:30 – 18:00 Break

18:00 Meeting point at Hartmannfabrik

18:15 – 18:45 Opening Ritual by Arba Manillah

Welcome words by Stefan Schmidtke & Inge Ceustermans

Location: Hartmannfabrik

18:45 – 20:15 Opening Panel Conversation - How do we work effectively with threats, crisis and collapse? How do we build systems -personal, cultural, economic- that don't just resist dissonance, but grow because of it?

Speakers: Kelsa Trom (United States), Roni Isola (Argentina), Simon Abrahams (Australia) & Alia Alzougbi (Lebanon/UK - online)

Facilitated by: Inge Ceustermans (Belgium) & Nástio Mosquito (Angola)

20:15 – 22:00 Opening Dinner

Location: Hartmannfabrik

22:00 End of the day programme

DAY TWO: Friday, 21 November

Experts present: Vigdís, Nástio, Inge, Kelsa and Roni

- 09:30 – 10:30** Introducing a **Code of Conduct** / group contributes to code of conduct
Location: Schmidtbank
- 10:30 – 10:45** Coffee Break
- 10:45 – 11:45** **Perspectives in the arts in Saxony and Germany, and introduction to the Chemnitz European Capital of Culture 2025 by Stefan Schmidtke**
- 11:45 – 13:00** **Chemnitz Walking Tour with Pascal Anselmi (Chemnitz ECoC 2025 Program Manager)**
- 13:00 – 14:00** Lunch
Location: Schmidtbank
- 14:00 – 16:00** **Session: World Temperature - Room Temperature**
- 16:00 – 16:15** Coffee Break
- 16:15 – 18:15** **Peer connect session**
Location: Schmidtbank
- 18:15 – 19:00** Free time
- 19:00 – 20:30** Dinner at Malula
- 20:30** End of the day programme

DAY THREE: Saturday, 22 November

Experts present: Alia, Vigdís, Nástio, Inge, Kelsa and Roni

09:30 – 11:00 **Working session** - Understanding your own leadership style.

Location: Schmidtbank

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 13:30 **Working session** – What does inclusive and forward-thinking leadership look like in the context of today's festivals and cultural initiatives? What kind of leadership is needed to navigate today's cultural landscape with integrity, courage, and care?

How has your value system evolved through your work journey?

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch

Location: Schmidtbank

14:30 – 15:30 **Conversation with Theater der Welt 2026 Co-Curators**

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:30 **Festival Presentations**

17:30 – 19:30 Free time

19:30 – 21:00 Dinner at Turmbräuhaus

19:00 – 03:00 Optional: **United Club Festival** - a night that connects Chemnitz's club culture.

Location: aaltra - Atomino - Lokomov - No Nation Club - transit - Weltecho

DAY FOUR: Sunday, 23 November

Experts present: Alia, Nástio, Inge, Kelsa, Keng Sen and Roni

10:30 – 11:30 Optional: **Visit NSO-Complex** (group 1)

11:00 – 12:00 Optional: **Visit NSO-Complex** (group 2)

12:00 – 12:15 Walk to Schmidtbank

12:30 – 14:00 **Long Table**

Location: Schmidtbank

14:00 – 15:00 **Lunch**

Location: Schmidtbank

15:00 – 15:30 **Passion Provocations**

15:30 – 17:00 **Festival Presentations**

17:10 – 18:30 **One-on-one sessions with mentors** / Journaling / Free time

18:30 – 20:00 Free time

20:00 – 22:00 Dinner at L'Osteria

DAY FIVE: Monday, 24 November

Experts present: Alia, Nástio, Kelsa, Keng Sen and Roni

- 08:30 – 09:00** Bus to Augustusburg (30')
- 09:00 – 10:00** Welcome and introduction at Lehngericht
- 10:00 – 11:30** **Group work - Dreaming up international collaborative projects**
- 11:30 – 11:45** Coffee break
- 11:45 – 13:00** Continuation group work
- 13:00 – 14:00** Lunch
- 14:00 – 15:00** Optional: **Walk to the castle**
- 15:00 – 17:00** **Mentors' roulette (of practical tools)**
- 17:00 – 17:30** Bus to Chemnitz (30')
- 17:30 – 19:30** Free time
- 19:30 – 21:00** Dinner at Miramar
- 21:00** End of the day programme

DAY SIX: Tuesday, 25 November

Experts present: Alia, Nástio, Kelsa, Keng Sen and Roni

09:30 – 11:00 Group work - Dreaming up international collaborative projects

Location: Schmidtbank

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:15 C the Unseen, perspective on the local cultural scene by Benjamin, Lilu and Mariia

12:15 – 12:30 Break

12:30 – 13:25 One-on-One sessions with mentors / group sharing

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

Location: Schmidtbank

14:00 – 15:15 The view from the bridge: The relationship of power between the Global South and the North in terms of mobility of cultural projects by Roni Isola

15:15 - 15:30 Break

15:30 – 17:00 One-on-One sessions with mentors / group sharing

17:00 – 19:30 Free time

19:30 – 21:00 Dinner at Hoang58

21:30 – 23:30 Atelier concert

Location: Kulturbahnhof Chemnitz

23:30 End of the day programme

DAY SEVEN: Wednesday, 26 November

Experts present: Alia, Nástio, Kelsa, Keng Sen and Roni

10:00 – 12:00 **Atelier closing plenary**

- Key learnings, takeaways from the Atelier
- What each most needs going forward; what each can offer

Location: Schmidtbank

12:00 - 13:00 **Atelier feedback & evaluation**

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

Location: Schmidtbank

14:00 – 19:00 Free time

Optional Cultural Visit:

15:00 to 16:30

Quarantine – The Questions & Would Like To Meet – artists' open studios & Conversation with Richard Gregory (Artistic Director - Quarantine) and the Museum curators

Location: Museum Gunzenhauser

19:00 – 21:00 **Closing Dinner** at Turm-Brauhaus

21:00 End of the day program

Organizers & Partners

The **Festival Academy** believes festivals are bridging platforms with a direct link to people and civil society structures. We believe a critical reflection between artists, arts and cultural managers worldwide and cross-sectoral stakeholders can bring about positive change, informed awareness, ideas and proposals for actions through personal human relations and based on knowing, respecting and tolerating different value and belief systems. We are a global community of more than 1200 festival managers from 100+ countries today.

The Festival Academy receives a grant of **Open Society Foundations** for 2023-2025.

If you wish to strengthen our global inclusive conversation and **support** young festival managers and our international activities, click [here](#).



With the motto "C the Unseen", the **European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025 GmbH** focuses on activities and artistic projects that have a lasting impact in the areas of socio-culture, art, corporate culture, building culture, food and nutrition culture, the environment, sustainability, children's, youth and senior citizens' activities, as well as numerous other areas of society and culture. To this purpose, it brings together regional, national and international partners.



This project is co-financed by tax funds on the basis of the parliamentary budget of the state of Saxony and by federal funds from the Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media), as well as funds from the City of Chemnitz.



Drosos Foundation is committed to enabling disadvantaged children, young people and young adults to take control of their lives and make a positive contribution within their community. The Foundation promotes skills and creates living conditions which enable these people to fulfil their responsibilities. Drosos Foundation is convinced that life and technical skills are key elements in personal development. These skills help children, young people and young adults to be independent in the way they manage and take responsibility for their own lives.

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The Festival Academy is an initiative of the **European Festivals Association (EFA)** which unites distinguished music, dance, theatre and multidisciplinary arts festivals from Europe and beyond since 1952. It connects about 100 festivals and festival associations in 40 countries. EFA's activities are implemented with the support of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.



Thanks to the support of the **Open Society Foundations**, The Festival Academy is able to further extend its activities geographically as well as its global community of festival makers. More people worldwide will have the chance to participate in its programmes and will become part of its growing community.

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS