

Merano 2017

« 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 17 - 23 November 2017

Speech by

**Carolina Courbis Bascuñán**

Participant in the Atelier for Young Festival Managers Merano 2017

**Closing Ceremony of the Atelier for Young Festival Managers Merano 2017**

23 November, Merano, Italy

In the past seven days we, all together, have been living an unusual and privileged parallel life. I feel that we've been part of a sort of social experiment, a rare situation where people from all over the world have gathered together to think, make questions, talk, eat, share, drink, exchange and debate.

In this beautiful city of Merano, where I had never been before, but with which I now feel connected to, we've managed to create between complete strangers a generous, tolerant, empathetic, supportive and genuinely interested group environment.

We didn't know each other before but now we share common experiences such as: a dinner in a castle, have met Ice Man personally, walked alongside the river watching The Alps, heard to one of the world's leading accordion performers, have had dinner in a contemporary visual arts museum and heard a concert with a man playing the harp and the piano at the same time while we could also relax our minds watching a light show.

This was possible of course thanks to a great organisation, its smart structure, but also by the passion of the people behind it, Hugo, Inge, Laure, Pauline, Andreas, Hermann and Elizabeth that trusted us and invited us to be part of this amazing initiative.

What I feel that what's very valuable from the Atelier is:

The amazing pool of mentors that shared their experience with us. A group of real experts in their fields from a range of backgrounds, that were generous enough to tell us about their stories, ideas, achievements and failures, but overall that were genuinely open to have an horizontal conversation with us which in every single case, nurtured our idea of festivals.

Also, the fascinating cultural exchange between all our different origins and backgrounds. I have to say that this is the first time in my life that I've met someone from Lithuania, Czech Republic, Malta or Latvia, and also is the first time that I'm involved in so many conversations about classical music and its challenges. I now can't wait to visit all of your countries and festivals and know more about your culture. I'm seriously thinking of organising a tour to visit you all. These seven days were a fantastic class of history taught by first hand teachers.

I also found the local approach that we had to the city of Merano totally brilliant. Listening to the Mayor, having guided tours in the museum, the castle, the theatre and getting to know the stories about the city showed us how important is to engage in a local way to the place we are visiting. As we have discussed these days, this is essential for festival producing, and as Rose said in her presentation, when working internationally, being rooted to the local is extremely important.

I also really appreciate the tremendous value of having a space to share questions with no prejudice or expected answers.

And even though we agree that perhaps we are going back home with even more questions than with the ones we arrived with to the Atelier, I'm sure we've gained invaluable new knowledge, but not just that, we have also gained an amazing bunch of new friends literally from all over the world.

During the Atelier, I took note of all what was mentioned about how we could define a festival, and this is what I got:

Festival as a celebration

Festival as an assembly

Festival as an experimental zone for sociability

Festival as action

Festival as a performance

Festival as an ecosystem

Festival as an adventure

Festival as a thinking entity

Festival as a laboratory

Festival as connections

Festival as a way of being together

Festival as a creative producer

Festival as a provoker

International Festival as a political decision

I want to thank every one of you for being such a tremendous source of inspiration, courage and passion.

And I really hope we stay in touch and continue together to tackle the important topics that we have been discussing these days such as censorship, audiences, curating, resources, politics, ecology, accessibility, identity, team building and sustainability.

And never forget what Rose said: We don't follow policy, we challenge policy.

I don't know if you, but I feel I'm going back to reality with a total new fresh air.

Thank you so much.