

Fabulamundi **New Voices** **Diversifying** **Theatre**

A Casebook

**FABULAMUNDI NEW VOICES:
DIVERSIFYING THEATRE**

A Casebook

**FABULAMUNDI
PLAYWRITING
E U R O P E
NEW VOICES**

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FOREWORD

New Voices for a More Diverse Theatre

BY

HEIDI WILEY

Executive Director, European Theatre Convention
(Germany)

Theatre has always been a space where new ideas find form, and where the most urgent questions of our time are tested aloud. With *Fabulamundi New Voices: Diversifying Theatre*, we proudly present the **emergence of a generation that is reshaping what theatre can be**. This casebook offers a unique glimpse into **artistic, systemic and participatory ways cultural institutions across Europe are diversifying the narratives of what theatre can become, together with the voices of young generations.**

The European Theatre Convention is honoured to have partnered in this forward-thinking European project, *Fabulamundi New Voices*. Our involvement is part of a broader commitment to supporting collaboration across Europe's public theatre landscape, especially when it comes to enabling new and diverse generations of writers, practitioners, and audiences to find their place.

This casebook maps a process of transformation. Within its pages, you will find testimonies of collaboration, experimentation, and reinvention - from Berlin to Bucharest, Prague to Paris. You will encounter playwrights, educators, and theatre-makers daring to expand the boundaries of what it means to write and stage a play today. Through workshops, residencies, performances, and open dialogue, they have forged models of creation rooted in diversity, youth empowerment, and social engagement.

What emerges across the pages of this casebook is not a single model, but a **plurality of approaches**, through creative writing workshops, dramaturgical labs, immersive performances, or experimental residencies. All point toward the same intention: to open theatre to new voices and to offer those voices the care, time, and trust they deserve.

This collaborative work reminds us that artistic development is not only about outcomes. It is also about listening, allowing ideas to unfold, and recognising that risk, imperfection, and playfulness are vital parts of the creative process. Especially in challenging times, these practices carry with them a form of resilience, both cultural and human.

The Fabulamundi New Voices project project has particularly shown us how vital it is to create frameworks that support co-creation, listening, and care — principles we must champion in a time of uncertainty and fragmentation.

As we bring this casebook into the hands of the wider public, we invite you to read it not as a conclusion, but as an invitation. The stories and practices shared here point to the ongoing work ahead: **building sustainable, inclusive, and artistically bold futures for European theatre.**

To all the organisations, theatre-makers and partners who made Fabulamundi New Voices possible — thank you. A special thanks goes to the support received from the Creative Europe programme of the European Union for financing Fabulamundi New Voices. Let us continue to listen, collaborate, and keep imagining together.



Fabulamundi New Voices Community Meeting
in Venice, October 2023
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Section I

Youth, Inclusion, and the Future of Dramatic Writing



Das Wunder vom Wedding, play by Katharina Schlender
Interkulturelle Theaterzentrum Berlin e.V.
© Bernd Kumar

SECTION 1

The Creative Transformation of a Theatre in Berlin, Neukölln

BY

ROLF KEMNITZER

First Chairman, Interkulturelle Theaterzentrum Berlin e.V.
(Germany)

The European author exchange project Fabulamundi New Voices has had a remarkable impact on our small theatre in Neukölln, located in Berlin, Germany. What began as an experimental project has not only expanded our artistic repertory, but also fundamentally changed our educational orientation.

In a district as lively and diverse as Neukölln, we have long seen ourselves in the role of not only offering professional theatre productions for children and young people, but also acting as a place of cultural learning. However, by participating in this international exchange programme and working with professional authors, **our association has developed in a way that we would not have expected.** Today, our theatre's focus is more than ever on its own creative production and the promotion of contemporary drama literature.

A New Artistic-Educational Orientation

In addition to a fixed programme for professional children's and youth theatre, our association has mainly offered cultural education courses in recent years. These courses mainly covered acting techniques, theatre practice and dealing with existing plays, especially for young audiences. However, with the introduction of the Fabulamundi New Voices project, this focus has broadened.

The two professional authors who were assigned to us as part of the project conducted several creative writing workshops at schools in the area. The aim of these workshops was to teach the young people the basics of creative writing and to encourage them to develop their own stories. The workshop that took place in our own premises was

particularly impressive. The results were astonishing: not only did **the participating students discover creative writing as a means of expression for themselves, but our own courses in the association also experienced a significant change as a result** of the reports on these workshops.

Many of the young people who were already active in our acting groups suddenly showed an increased interest in writing their own texts and integrating them into their theatre work. The teachers at our theatre, who were initially sceptical about this new direction, soon recognised the potential. They began to incorporate creative writing techniques into their theatre education and encouraged groups to write and stage their own plays.

The Power of Self-Production: Young Theatre Groups Write Their Own Plays

One of the most significant successes of this project is undoubtedly **the emergence of a new generation of authors in our own theatre groups**. A young theatre group that regularly rehearses with us and had previously mainly focused on staging classic children's theatre texts began to write their own theatre texts after the workshop. This group, consisting of young people aged 14 to 18, dealt intensively with the question of how they could bring their own stories to life on stage.

What was particularly exciting was the fact that the young people not only told their own, very personal stories, but also creatively reshaped existing literary material - such as fairy tales or mythological stories. In this engagement with foreign material, a large number of new, sometimes humorous, sometimes thoughtful pieces emerged that

encouraged the imagination and creative expression of the young people. **For the first time, the young authors felt like they were really the creators of their own works, and the opportunity to stage these stories on stage opened up completely new creative spaces for them.**

This process not only inspired the young people, but also the theatre itself. The association, which had previously focused primarily on acting techniques and staging finished plays, now began to place **greater emphasis on play development**. This development has expanded and enriched our educational and artistic offerings. What was originally intended as a one-off experiment as part of an exchange project has become an integral part of our work.

Contemporary Dramatic Literature at the Centre

Another significant change that Fabulamundi New Voices brought to our theatre is the increased engagement with contemporary dramatic literature. The workshops and close collaboration with the authors not only promoted the creative potential of the young people, but also raised awareness of modern theatre texts. Our teachers began to actively encourage their groups to engage with contemporary dramas and to use these texts as inspiration for their own work.

This intensive engagement with modern drama literature not only opened up new ways of expression for the young people, but also encouraged them to see the theatre as a place to engage with current social issues. Instead of limiting themselves to classic material or traditional children's plays, the groups began to deal with topics such as social injustice, migration, environmental issues or the

search for identity in their own plays. For them, **the theatre became a space in which they could reflect on their own experiences and those of their fellow human beings.**

A particularly impressive example of this is the first play that was created as part of this new direction. It is entitled *Junk* and is about objects found on the street that other people have thrown away. These objects - from old bicycles to seemingly worthless garbage - served as a starting point for dialogues and stories that the young people developed as part of the workshop. The "junk" became a metaphor for what our society often considers worthless, but for the young people it took on new stories, perspectives and meaning.

From the Workshop to the Stage: Integration Into the Programme

The success of these in-house productions has prompted us as a theatre to think seriously about how we can integrate the resulting works into our regular programme. The possibility of bringing the results of creative writing projects developed by the young people themselves to the stage in a professional manner is an exciting vision that our team is pursuing with great enthusiasm.

We plan to initiate collaborations with professional actors in the future in order to perform selected pieces that emerge from these projects at a high artistic level. This collaboration could not only give the young people valuable insights into professional theatre work, but also **raise their own productions to a new, even more demanding level.** This would enable our theatre to not only remain a place of cultural education and theatre pedagogy, but also a

laboratory for new, contemporary plays written and staged by young people for young people.

Outlook: Sustainable Changes and Future Perspectives

Fabulamundi New Voices has changed our theatre in Neukölln for the long term. The project has not only expanded our educational and artistic repertoire, but has also created a new creative dynamic in our rooms. Working with the young people who have become independent authors as part of the project has shown us the potential that lies in promoting creative writing.

The focus on contemporary drama literature, the development of our own plays and the intensive examination of current topics have not only inspired the young people, but have also enriched our theatre.

In the future, we would like to further intensify our collaboration with international authors and continue the exchange of creative ideas between the countries of Europe. The opportunity to network with other theatres and creative minds from all over Europe has shown us **how important this cultural dialogue is for the development of new forms of performance, and for the strengthening of theatre as a place of cultural exchange, innovation and artistic diversity.**

SECTION 1

Dramaturgy as Protocols of Interaction

BY

PIERSANDRA DI MATTEO

Performing Arts Theorist, Curator and Dramaturg,
University Iuav of Venice (Italy)

Area06 has invited the artist Eva Geatti to conceive, organise, and curate a series of workshops across various cities in Italy, including Bologna and Rome, in Italy. These workshops aim to engage young people from different educational backgrounds and generations in the realm of performing arts. The initiative targets youth who are already interested in performing arts as well as those who have traditionally been distant or excluded, particularly those with second-generation and migrant backgrounds.

This initiative reflects a deliberate choice to embrace and intersect diverse perspectives and life experiences, embodying a representative vision of youth that transcends boundaries. Inclusivity lies at the heart of our artistic practices, driven by the potential for artists to adapt and evolve their projects through meaningful social interactions and encounters.

The artistic practice we promoted has been enriched by the vibrant mosaic of experiences, perspectives, and cultures that young subjectivities bring to the collective dramaturgical work. This diversity stems from deliberate partnerships with local social organisations and high schools in Rome and Bologna, linking us to the dynamic fabric of urban life, where various social, economic, and cultural contexts coexist and interact. Central to our engagement with youth are themes of decolonisation and inclusivity. Engaging with young participants fosters a fertile ground for artistic exploration and protocols of interaction, fostering safe spaces where every voice can be heard, valued, and respected.

Through these practices, we ensure our work resonates with young participants in order to **transform the creative process itself into a model for a more inclusive society.**

Artists play a unique role in this endeavour by providing platforms for historically marginalised or silenced voices, enabling a new generation from diverse backgrounds and social conditions **to amplify their stories and challenge prevailing narratives in the creative process.**

This approach offers new potentiality for contemporary dramaturgy to address privilege and political responsibility. Through collaborative projects, **we aim to nurture a sense of empowerment through self-expression and agency among young people**, encouraging them to reclaim their identities and histories.

The virtuous methodology that has emerged can be summarised as a **decolonial and inclusive approach**, based on the possibility of working with young people and even very young ones, also in formal educational settings such as technical high schools, without being confined to a single city, thereby blending inside the workshop different socio-cultural contexts.



Workshop with Eva Geatti
© Maria Giovanna Soderò

SECTION 1

Nurturing New Voices and New Audiences

BY

PAVLA KLOUZALOVÁ

General Director, Divadlo Letí (Czechia)

Divadlo LETÍ is one of the oldest Czech independent theatres. Since its foundation in 2005, it has focused on new dramaturgy, especially European. All of its productions are either Czech or world premieres, and the theatre often initiates the creation of new plays through its residency programme.

The theatre does not have its own ensemble and does not adhere to a fixed directing poetics. Its goal is to discover new innovative plays with relevant social topics, that often deal with political themes, social analysis, intergenerational relationship analysis, or the experiences and challenges faced by minority groups.

Divadlo LETÍ also explores new possibilities for staging plays, such as site-specific or immersive theatre. It continuously initiates projects outside traditional theatre venues.

Since 2015, Divadlo LETÍ has been in a permanent residency at Theatre VILA Štvanice in Prague.

In 2017, thanks to a shared interest in promoting contemporary drama, Divadlo LETÍ became a member of the international network Fabulamundi. For their first common project, Divadlo LETÍ presented new plays and stage readings of established European playwrights, and produced the immersive performance *CAMP Q* written by Czech and Catalan playwrights.

In 2023, Fabulamundi presented a new project aimed at giving space to young new voices — hence the title *New Voices* — and the project is focused on young professionals. The range of the workshops included in the project is broad — from one-day workshops for high school students to long-term seminars for university graduates.

Divadlo LETÍ focused on working with young

professionals in the *New Voices* project. The theatre prepared four long-term workshops for playwrights up to 27 years old. During the first workshop, a group of six playwrights attended masterclasses led by Czech professionals who shared their knowledge across the theatre field. They had the opportunity to learn the basics of copyright, production, agency representation, writing for different media, and more. As a result of a second workshop, each playwright wrote a short play on the theme *"The end of the world"*. During the third and fourth workshops, the playwrights were accompanied by young directors and set designers, and together they prepared an immersive performance. The playwrights had the unique opportunity to be a part of a creative team and, together with the directors and the other authors, they could adjust their text to be a coherent part of the performance.

For Divadlo LETÍ, the *New Voices* project represents a valuable opportunity to engage a younger audience. The theatre was founded in 2005 by recent drama school graduates. Although it never had a permanent ensemble, it often brought together young directors and actors. Combined with the distinctive poetics of its productions, Divadlo LETÍ naturally attracted a younger audience. This remains true today, and the core of Divadlo LETÍ's audience is still recruited from this group, as audience research conducted in the past has shown. The typical Divadlo LETÍ spectator is between 25 and 50 years old and usually attends performances based on word of mouth. It is always important to know your audience and understand how they access information - but it is equally essential to be aware of the kind of dramaturgy a theatre is focused on.

Divadlo LETÍ not only presents contemporary drama but also explores possibilities for staging new plays, such as site-specific and immersive theatre. **To remain relevant, it is essential for theatre to stay in contact with the younger generation of authors and directors. And to remain financially sustainable, it must be able to engage young audiences.** It's a logical conclusion.

Since its beginning Divadlo LETÍ has been presenting new plays both in the form of performances as well as stage readings. This model allows not only to present more contemporary plays, but also gives the theatre a chance to work with young professionals – directors, stage designers, actors – on smaller-scale projects. Many of these young professionals became regular collaborators not just of Divadlo LETÍ but also of other Czech theatres.

In the early years, stage readings formed one of the important dramaturgical lines of Divadlo LETÍ's production. At the time, stage readings were not so common, and this approach had its own dedicated audience. However, over the course of time, more and more theatres began producing stage readings, and with the growing popularity of formats like author readings, competition for audience attention increased noticeably. It became necessary to rethink the concept and offer something new. Today, Divadlo LETÍ commissions plays specifically for this project and experiments with different forms of staging it (such as a staged reading combined with dinner). **To this day, staged readings remain one of Divadlo LETÍ's strategies to engage with young audiences.**

Divadlo LETÍ uses a mix of traditional communication tools to promote its work, including print, audio and video

promotion, and social media, of course. The impact of the last one is undeniable and still growing. For a communication strategy to be successful, it's important to use the right content adapted for each channel. For social media, it is crucial – with the right content, an organic reach can multiply its effect.

If we return to Divadlo LETÍ's audience groups, they are made up primarily of middle-aged individuals, many of whom are regular spectators and their friends. While recommendations from friends and family are likely the main reason this group attends performances, they also mentioned that promotion, reviews, and even the cast may play a role in their decision.

On the other hand, young adults admit to being influenced by friends and opinion makers. Current topics or familiar faces may attract their interest, but the primary reason they seek out more information about a show is a recommendation, often received through social media.

In light of all the above, Divadlo LETÍ began preparing the final outcome of the workshops – **an immersive performance**. As required by the project, the artistic team was composed of young professionals, including playwrights, directors, stage designers and even actors. The performance was staged eight times in a row. With a capacity of 70 seats per show, this meant nearly 600 tickets had to be sold within a limited time. Divadlo LETÍ typically stages plays once a month, with an auditorium capacity of 60 seats. When a new play is added to the repertoire, there is usually a time gap between the opening night and the next representation - something the marketing team can use to their advantage to promote the show.

Poslední zhasne had to be promoted differently. We identified that our main target groups would be young audiences and people familiar with immersive theatre, so it was necessary to design our promotion accordingly. Divadlo LETÍ benefited from its experience with the stage readings and their social media-focused promotion. From the start, the *Poslední zhasne* project was communicated on social media with an emphasis on its artistic team. Not only were they tagged in many posts, but they also proactively shared stories about the project's progress. We believe this approach helped raise awareness of the project and reach groups that might otherwise have been overlooked. The project ultimately sold out, with the audience evenly made up of regular spectators, students and immersive theatre fans.

To conclude, it can be said that the *Poslední zhasne* project was successful not just as a workshop for young professionals but also as a communicative and promotional tool. Thanks to this final workshop of the New Voices project, Divadlo LETÍ began working with young professionals and is already planning on collaborating with some of them on future projects.

There is also a noticeable increase in interest from young audiences on the theatre's social networks. Of course, it is unrealistic to expect all those concerned to become regular spectators, but at least they are now more familiar with the theatre's brand and what it represents.

"With this premiere, Divadlo LETÍ confirms its positively progressive role and sets an example of what even more established scenes could adopt: when they dedicate their facilities, time, and professional guidance to the

youngest generation, they at least repay them with a fresh perspective, themes, and untried creativity.” — Barbora Schneidrová, Deník N



Fabulamundi New Voices Community Meeting
in Belgrade, October 2024
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Section II

Models of Practice — Designing Ecosystems for Contemporary Drama



From left to right:

Playwrights Hannah K Bründl, Maurus Jacobs,
Charlotte Zorell, Kaja Knauer and Lena Riemer

© Anna Zehetgruber

SECTION 2

Wiener Wortstaetten's Drama Lab as Best Practice Example for the Promotion of (Young) Playwrights

BY

BERNHARD STUDLAR

Playwright and Artistic Director,
Wiener Wortstaetten (Austria)

Between January and November 2024, the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN conducted a long-term workshop under my direction as part of the New Voices edition of the Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe project. Entitled "Drama Lab," it was designed for young German-speaking authors from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

The following article reflects on this specific collaboration and connects it with broader considerations and ideas for the promotion of contemporary drama.

About the Project

The WIENER WORTSTAETTEN's Drama Lab is a **collaborative model of working with authors** that I have developed over the years and have continuously evaluated with the aim of promoting contemporary drama.

In general, the aim is to create good working conditions for freelance authors so that they can write new plays for a range of venues, from the independent scene to the city and state theatres.

Unlike the typical way plays are commissioned through theatres, the Drama Lab is not influenced by the daily operations of a (city) theatre. Instead, it is entirely dedicated to supporting playwrights. As an independent writing lab, we ask ourselves the question: *How can we foster stronger connections between authors? And how can we make theatres excited about the texts of young playwrights who are not yet established?*

An answer to the latter question is "**binding commitment.**" To achieve this, the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN cooperates in the name of the Drama Lab with a rotating group of "**mentor theatres,**" which are part of the Drama Lab

for one season, contractually committing (yes, it's about commitment!) to premiering one of the resulting plays in the following season. Such a time gap allows the theatre to carefully prepare the premiere with regards to selecting the director and cast. During this process, the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN is available for consultation but has no influence on the artistic decisions. Naturally, the partner theatres are involved in the Drama Lab process from the very beginning, usually through a dramaturg who acts as a direct point of contact. In this way, they can follow how an author's initial ideas develop into full-length plays. Careful planning is essential for these long-term collaborations to ensure that all parties involved (authors, dramaturgs, production managers, and theatre makers) ultimately benefit from their participation. The WIENER WORTSTAETTEN's leading team is responsible for this planning.

Procedure

1. Selection

For the 2024 Drama Lab, the collaboration between the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN and the Theater am Werk in Vienna began as early as the summer of 2023. The theatre had the opportunity to influence the call for proposals through a jointly formulated text and opted to specify but a single practical or pragmatic requirement: the plays to be written should be able to be performed by no more than five actors. Published in early September 2023, the call was directed towards authors, teams, or collectives who were 27 years old or younger, in accordance with the criteria of "New Voices."

Submissions had to be made anonymously and include an idea sketch as well as scene material of up to 10 pages. I would like to emphasise that **making the process anonymous is highly beneficial since it eliminates any bias in the selection process**. We introduced this method in 2022 and have only had positive experiences with it. As for the jury, it should be noted that it changes annually and that attention is paid to ensuring a balanced mix of theatre professionals. The 2024 jury, in particular, included the head dramaturg of the Theater am Werk, a freelance director and actress, as well as myself, an author and workshop leader of the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN. Of the 50 applications, our three-member jury of experts ultimately selected five authors for the Drama Lab.¹

2. Working Process

For their participation in the Drama Lab, the selected authors receive a work contract that details their responsibilities and deliverables. Yes, the authors are paid for their work! Not extravagantly, but with appreciation. They begin working on their texts each January.

For starters, the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN hosts a three-day in-person meeting in Vienna, which all participants are required to attend. Required? Yes. It sounds strict, but it's not. That's because this "obligation" is in fact essential for the group dynamics, the working atmosphere, and getting to know one another. At this first meeting, we discuss the author's ideas for the plays, exchange experiences from within the theatre world, and explore the participants'

¹ <https://www.wortstaetten.at/projects/drama-lab-24>

expectations from the Drama Lab. Our goal at this meeting is to establish **a creative and trusting basis for the collaboration** in the months ahead, and to provide everyone with a clear overview of upcoming tasks and deadlines. Social activities such as joint theatre visits and dinners round out the first meeting. Content-wise, our focus during this initial meeting is on the individual play ideas and writing projects. Each author presents their play in the discussions that are moderated by the workshop leader. Afterwards, we then communally read excerpts and gather initial impressions. In a second round, specific questions regarding content, characters, or the characters' use of language are discussed. And finally, we come together as a group to discuss how each piece might continue to develop. What's important here is that everyone contributes their creativity and expertise to the group, since, as the saying goes, "sharing is caring!" And even if some suggestions might not seem to correspond to an author's vision or "fit" the current state of their text at first glance, in the end — and I can say this after more than 20 years of experience — you can learn a lot for your own work and yourself from the thinking and writing, and subsequently from the progress of other colleagues. Ideally, everyone knows after these three days how they should proceed with their pieces and what they want to write and/or research before the next sessions.

The following meetings take place online about eight weeks later. We meet once a day for about two hours over the course of a week to discuss the new material or a current draft of one of the author's works. The submission deadline is one week before each meeting to allow sufficient time for preparation. Depending on the author's progress

and the structure of their plays (well made, post-dramatic, comedy, open form), these meetings either pertain to questions of form (i.e.: how is the story told?), the constellation of characters (i.e. does it need a narrator? Are the characters sufficiently differentiated?), or questions of content and comprehensibility. Naturally, there are also questions regarding language and poetics. Regarding the use of language, rhythm, and dialogue.

All of these topics and questions are not specific to the online meetings. They are instead general, fundamental concerns that are part of every Drama Lab meeting.

This is followed by the next phase of writing for the authors. Then we reunite 10 weeks later for another in-person meeting. In addition to the group editing methods already mentioned, the focus here is on testing the plays from the perspective of theatre practice. For this particular Drama Lab meeting, we invite various experts from the theatre world. These include either actors who read individual scenes aloud or directors who contribute their perspectives on how the plays might be staged. They all support the authors in their work by offering diverse and constructive feedback for the next phase of writing. That's because the goal after this third meeting is for the participating authors to submit a first (rough) draft of their plays by the beginning of the summer, roughly six months in. These texts are then discussed during online meetings, and the authors use the insights they've gained to revise their plays one more time. During this final phase, the workshop leaders are available for one-on-one editorial feedback.

And then, after nine months — voilà! the drama baby is born. Or, to put it more soberly, by the end of the summer,

in mid-September, there's the editorial deadline for the final play so that the next steps of the presentation can be planned.

3. Presentation

At the conclusion of each Drama Lab, all of the resulting plays are published by the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN as a single volume in the Edition Goldstück.²

Then, the texts are presented for the first time to the public in staged readings as part of the *Wortstattnächte* series of events.³

We consider the format of staged readings to be particularly suitable for the presentation of new texts. They are characterised by a short, intensive rehearsal period (three to five days) and a playful approach that is as much fun for the participating artists as for the audience. Each play receives its own artistic leading team that pays attention to the text's specific features and develops an appropriate artistic form.

These somewhat "incomplete" theatre productions create a low-threshold and informal atmosphere in the evenings, making it easier for the audience to access new drama while inviting interested theatre professionals to further engage with the plays. It is not the steadily growing audience interest alone that shows validation to us of this path to production. The presentations at the *Wortstattnächte* have led to subsequent world premieres of the texts on several occasions, and stage agencies in

Germany and Austria have also shown interest in our authors and events.

Conclusion

The Drama Lab is a successful model for supporting authors who write for the stage. It is tailored to the individual needs of each participant and relies on the mentorship of experienced playwrights and input from experts in the theatre world. The collaboration among the participating authors – the working with and for one another – is essential for the process to succeed. **The Drama Lab enables authors to exchange the often-solitary profession of writing for a lively, practice-oriented creative process with peers over the span of a year. It is a project by writers for writers and for the entire theatre world.**

Translated from German by Shane Anderson.

² <https://www.wortstaetten.at/projects/publikationen>

³ <https://www.wortstaetten.at/projects/wortstattnaechte-24/>

SECTION 2

How Does a European Project Help Develop Institutional Collaboration on a National Scale: The Case of La Mousson d'été

BY

ERELL BLOUËT

General Secretary,
La Mousson d'été (France)

This article examines the extent to which participating in the *New Voices* programme, co-funded by Creative Europe, has encouraged institutional collaboration at the national level, and the consequences of such partnerships in terms of organisation, image, and visibility for La Mousson d'été as well as for the Creative Europe programme.

As a festival, the Mousson d'été is one — if not the only — Fabulamundi network partner not to host an audience on a regular basis. Its activity is seasonal, mostly gathered around the festival periods of La Mousson d'hiver in March and La Mousson d'été in August, with little capacity to attract an audience outside of those well-identified periods. From the perspective of organising six Fabulamundi New Voices workshops all year round, that distinctive trait was both a challenging and a stimulating factor.

Impact of Previous European Projects on La Mousson d'été's Institutional Recognition (2017–2022)

In 2015, La Mousson d'été joined the Fabulamundi network, starting with the cycle titled 'Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe — *Crossing Generations*'. In 2017, our participation in the following programme 'Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe — *Beyond Borders*', co-funded by the European Union, received institutional recognition at a national level: at that time, the public authorities that provided structural funding for La Mousson d'été — in particular the national and regional cultural authorities, by far the greatest subsidy providers — increased their financial support by around a third, an amount that continued in subsequent years and continues to subsist to this day.

It is worth mentioning that in the nomenclature used by the French Ministry of Culture, the additional support granted to La Mousson d'été for its participation in that Creative Europe project is attributed to a credit line called 'Democratisation'. **Democratisation activities are those intended to facilitate audiences' access to a demanding cultural offer, one generally considered different and distant from the practices usually associated with a territory's local residents.**

Therefore, the notion of culture as conveyed by a European project is from the outset associated with the purpose of reaching out to spectators, in a dynamic of open-mindedness, exchange and dialogue, constitutive of the spirit of cultural democracy promoted by the European Union.

From the point of view of educational institutions, participating in the *Beyond Borders?* programme enabled La Mousson d'été to position itself alongside major partners in its region of domiciliation, the Grand Est region: the Université de Lorraine, an autonomous institution attached to the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, and the Rectorat de Nancy-Metz, an administrative body belonging to the French Ministry of Education and acting as its representative in the Grand Est region. Those two institutions were associated with La Mousson d'été's application to the '*Beyond Borders?*' project, and during the project implementation, hosted several workshops aimed at promoting European playwrights' works for the benefit of students and teachers. Such initiatives include **co-organising writing, translation or acting-based workshops with playwrights** such as **Helena Tornero** (March 2018), **Alexandra Badea** or **Nathalie Fillion** (both in February 2020).

At the time, the workshops featured essentially French or French-speaking playwrights. The most frequent format was that of short masterclasses (one to three sessions lasting a few hours each), scheduled in a manner to coincide with a performance by the same playwright or a residency organised in the vicinity. These one-off workshops were met with enthusiasm and left the participants motivated by an inspiring artistic encounter, but their success in terms of political impact or image is difficult to quantify, as the participants were not necessarily aware of the relationship between the tutoring playwrights and the Fabulamundi network.

New Voices: A New Mindset That Radically Changed the Relationship With Partner Institutions and Their Audiences

From the *New Voices* programme onwards, the situation changed radically: unlike the previous cycle, **the notion of transmission is now placed at the centre, with the workshops becoming the core of the project.** The proposed formats are longer, more intensive and more demanding in terms of content. In partnership with **Nathalie Fillion**, the playwright chosen by La Mousson d'été for the project, they involve a foreign co-mentor who attends part of the workshop in person, which implies more coordination and an elaborate discussion between the French author and their counterpart. This discussion has to be organised early enough to be finalised in time for dissemination through the Fabulamundi network's information channels (social networks, website and newsletter).

The *New Voices* workshops, whether short or long, are aimed at the young generation, and for reasons pertaining to

La Mousson d'été's identity as a festival, must be targeted for audiences mobilised outside its two main annual highlights. It was therefore necessary to propose them to cultural institutions, such as theatres or educational structures, open to the public all year round. Thanks to the financial support it offers, the Creative Europe programme gave La Mousson d'été the keys to approach some of France's leading institutions in the field of theatrical training and artistic production. La Mousson d'été thus initiated collaborations with two institutions in the Grand Est region: the National Drama Centre 'la Comédie de Reims' (Centre Dramatique National) and the prestigious Political Science Institute Sciences Po in Nancy, while renewing its collaboration with the Université de Lorraine. Partnerships were also forged outside the Grand Est region (where La Mousson d'été is based): in Paris with the Théâtre de la Cité internationale, and the National Superior Conservatory of Dramatic Arts (CNSAD-PSL), as well as in the Southern region with the Regional Acting School of Cannes-Marseille (ERACM).

The multiplication of partnerships over the years 2024–2025 was a remarkable opportunity for La Mousson d'été because it's a testimony to the structure's dynamism, hence sending an extremely positive signal about its financial health, **at a time when the state of public support for culture at national level can be described as morose at best, alarming at worst.** Our particular situation influenced the way in which La Mousson d'été is perceived both by other structures in the field of education, theatre and dramatic writing, and by public funding authorities, for whom it reinforced the feeling of solidity and trust. Overall, this initial contact made possible by the *New Voices* programme

paved the way for **new collaboration prospects between La Mousson d'été and a network of leading cultural partners.**

The *New Voices* programme also transformed the way in which institutional partnerships around cultural activities are established, with a significant impact in terms of administrative and logistical organisation. It also resulted in greatly increasing the visibility of these actions in the eyes of the public.

In terms of deliverables, the focus on communication materials meant La Mousson d'été had to assert its position as a producer of the workshop and impose the visibility of the Fabulamundi network and the Creative Europe programme. Partner institutions were requested to include the logos and social media handles of European partners in their communication around the activities. The nature of the relationship itself between La Mousson d'été and host organisations was changing: organising such workshops no longer consisted of simply putting playwrights and host structures in touch with each other. It required formalising exchanges by means of an agreement imposing obligatory mentions in terms of communication, it became necessary to obtain permission from workshop participants to use their image for the purpose of promoting our activities, etc. Participants were also to be informed of the existence of the *Cross the Map* programme and to complete evaluations intended for European monitoring at the end of each workshop. It quickly became apparent that having a representative of La Mousson d'été team on site would make it much easier to pass on such instructions.

Meeting the workshop participants without any intermediary had two direct consequences: on the one hand, it

provided an opportunity for La Mousson d'été to reach out to new audiences. As we said, three workshops were organised in regions outside the Grand Est, where La Mousson d'été is very well known, but participants from other regions were not necessarily aware of our association's goals and actions. It was also an opportunity to work with groups which La Mousson d'été doesn't usually work with. Through its collaboration with the National Drama Centre in Reims, La Mousson d'été addressed a group of eight teenagers from diverse ethnic backgrounds, living in an economically disadvantaged neighbourhood with restricted access to centres of "legitimate culture," to use Bourdieu's terminology. It proved particularly rewarding to be able to work with these young people through the European programme, and the youngsters expressed that they felt very privileged that a foreign playwright (namely, Catalan playwright **Oriol Morales i Pujolar**) had especially flown from abroad in order to meet them for the workshop.

On the other hand, visiting the workshops allowed La Mousson d'été to explain directly to registered participants the European framework in which the *New Voices* activities take place, and to underline the Creative Europe funding from which they benefit. **Disseminating the project's European spirit of collaboration emerged as the natural corollary of these interventions. The presence of the foreign co-mentor in the workshops gave a physical illustration to the cross-border philosophy of a European network, and a face to the intercultural collaborations it enables.**

Conclusion: Towards Genuine European Cultural Democratisation?

While La Mousson d'été's participation in the Europe Créative programme enabled it to benefit from support and recognition at the national level from as early as 2017, the advent of the *New Voices* project represents a decisive step forward in La Mousson d'été's positioning in the French and European cultural landscape. At the same time, the framework of the current project, its expectations and the expected deliverables, have led to an in-depth renewal of our approach to collaborating with workshop audiences at a national scale.

By paving the way for a broader dissemination of cultural initiatives and raising awareness about Creative Europe fundings for culture to various audiences, the *New Voices* project is fully in line with the objective of 'Democratisation' advocated by French public funding authorities since the early stages of the Fabulamundi programme — a concept to which we are now collectively giving its full meaning.

SECTION 2

How Can We Create Responsible Arts?

BY

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How can we create in the world we live in, taking into account the ecological emergency, the importance of representation, and the need for diversity both on stage and in daily life? How can we bring out new and different imaginaries, histories, and life experiences?

This article follows the intervention of **Sarah Tick** in Paris, February 2024, about the FAAR — Support Fund for Responsible Performing Arts¹. As secretary general and cofounder of the fund, her presentation offered the Fabulamundi community (both playwrights and partners) an opportunity to reflect on urgent contemporary issues and imagine **new ways of making the performing arts more representative, egalitarian, and environmentally conscious**. Her intervention also resonated with the central themes of the Fabulamundi project, particularly regarding gender equality and sustainability.

After a brief presentation of the fund, we will explore the **current obstacles related to discrimination, whether based on gender, disability, or ecological concerns, that hinder the circulation of contemporary and performing arts in France**. This analysis aims to highlight the present situation and open up perspectives and pathways for reflection made possible by such a support mechanism.

FAAR: Composition and Objectives

FAAR is made up of committed individuals on its board of directors and artistic committee, active in the live performance sector. The fund began with an investigation to better understand the current landscape, which led to the creation

1 'Fonds d'aide pour des arts vivants responsables' in French (www.faar-asso.org)

of a charter built around **four objectives**: fighting against discrimination, promoting a real equality of gender identities, combating ableism and improving accessibility for disabled people, and encouraging environmentally responsible artistic creations.

These objectives aim to support underrepresented, discriminated and socially engaged artists, while also raising awareness and mobilising various actors within the contemporary art landscape. They invite a new way of engaging as an audience member. To deepen its impact, the fund has developed a questionnaire for artists to better grasp the challenges they face in terms of discrimination. The questions address aspects such as a description of people on stage, the types of discrimination they experience, the themes of the play, and how they manage their companies.

Obstacles Linked to Discrimination: Analysis of the Current Situation and Perspectives, and Paths of Reflection Enabled by a Mechanism Like FAAR

FAAR's work has led to the identification of important forms of discrimination at several levels. We can begin by observing that contemporary and performing arts in France reflect a minority, both on stage and in the audience. This points to a systemic issue which affects society as a whole, and not just the realm of contemporary creation. Fighting discrimination in France is further complicated by legislation that prohibits the collection of ethnic statistics, making it difficult to measure and address inequalities. At the same time, public authorities call on theatres to reduce discrimination without providing adequate support or resources.

Change must occur on multiple levels to challenge and transform societal perceptions of marginalised groups. In this context, both artists and theatres must recognise their crucial role in shaping new representations and worlds on stage.

Discrimination regarding creation and what happens on stage

The most urgent challenge is to ensure that everyone can create, regardless of gender or disability, and build new imaginaries on stage that reflect contemporary society. In this context, it is essential to fight against different types of violence faced by marginalised people. It can be done through taking the time to listen, discover new voices, share advice, and foster networking.

Discrimination can also emerge through the themes of the play. A play can be labelled a 'community' topic, simply because a programmer or local authority is unfamiliar with its themes — for example, women with face coverings, or the connection between Black women and their hair. **Avoiding these topics is another way of invisibilising these marginalised communities.**

Fighting against discrimination is one of the core objectives of FAAR. By discrimination, FAAR understands harm or unequal treatment related to religion, real or perceived ethnic origins, social background, geographic situation, skin colour, access to education, visible and invisible disabilities, sexual orientation, and gender.

The fund underlines unbiased criteria, such as supporting artistic projects that give visibility to underrepresented people or artists affected by discrimination or multiple

oppressions. It also aims to encourage structures and artists to be more aware of cultural appropriation and to consider artists without formal artistic training.

The fund also pushes for a real equality of gender identities, which can be made possible with **strict wage equality: equal pay for equal work!** Tangible elements related to gender equality must be documented by the artist, such as staff awareness training, activist involvement and participation in nonprofit activities.

Discrimination regarding production and financial issues: ecological sustainability in question

Means of production must be improved and leveraged to fight against various biases and discrimination in funding and awarding processes. Financial resources will also be at the heart of a new vision for sustainable creation.

It is common to face refusals from theatres to collaborate on building coherent and sustainable tours, as many venues seek exclusivity within a 100 km radius. The fund encourages **environmentally responsible creations:** by advocating for the careful consideration of materials used in set construction, promoting reuse, mutualisation, and upcycling policies that take the source of the materials into consideration.

Beyond scenography, sustainability also extends to production practices, such as planning an **eco-friendly travel during touring:** avoiding flights for distances under 1,000 km, favouring trains, and encouraging car-sharing when cars are necessary. The eco-conception of a contemporary creation also includes the use of environmentally friendly accommodation and adopting new approaches

to meals, such as reducing meat consumption, minimising plastic packaging, and using reusable containers. Finally, it calls for reflections on communication practices, with less reliance on printed materials and better awareness of digital pollution.

Fighting against ableism and thinking about accessibility for disabled people

Discrimination related to additional costs linked to the presence of disabled artists (such as wheelchair users) is a real issue. While costs are always cited as the main reason, it's important to consider the ways disability is represented, on stage and in theatres more broadly.

FAAR calls for professional training for all, including awareness training for artistic teams and theatre staff, and the creation of individualised support to reduce vulnerability. For this reason, they recommend appointing a specialist within each team who can be consulted and provide assistance.

From a production perspective, it is advised to **create dedicated moments and maintain flexibility in scheduling to accommodate special needs.** It is also essential to ensure appropriate travel and accommodation solutions. Additionally, the fund urges increased attention to the needs of disabled audience members.

These considerations must indeed also extend to the audience. Opening contemporary and performing arts to all invites an analysis of the composition of audiences. In this perspective, theatres could become true spaces of encounter and social link, and not only on stage.

The FAAR — Support Fund for Responsible Performing Arts, created a few years ago in response to the issues outlined above, invites professionals and citizens to reflect on these topics through a new charter and new ways to think about contemporary creation. The team and artistic committee, renewed every two years, are responsible for selecting artists who will receive support and expertise from the fund in areas such as artistic skills, programming, financial assistance, advice, and more.

The fund facilitates awareness-raising around contemporary challenges through testimonies, exchanges between artists and institutions, and provides support through financial aid, workspace loans, advice, and networking. FAAR initially raises private funds to serve as leverage for public financing. These four objectives also contribute to the **development of new 'ethical dramaturgies,'** addressing issues such as ecology, gender equality, ethnic diversity, and accessibility for disabled artists — both in artistic work and in how artists manage their companies.



Fabulamundi New Voices Community Meeting
in Paris, February 2024
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SECTION 3

Cultural Leadership Through Cultural Democracy

BY

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Introduction

Amid the vast and often disorienting transformations facing our societies, arts and culture offer a space for meaning, critical reflection on both past and present, and inspiring visions of the future. As **Brian Eno** suggests, in a world rapidly advancing yet increasingly fragmented, **culture acts as a “fantastic conversation” that holds societies together and is essential to our shared future.** Democracies rely on this vision of progress to remain sustainable, as these hopeful images of a better future inspire citizens to exercise their freedoms and engage in democratic life. Through arts and culture, we imagine future possibilities, empowering citizens with democratic agency.

As migration trends and global challenges such as climate change intensify populist views and social division, culture is increasingly viewed as a way to bridge ideological and emotional divides and strengthen democracy, which is strained by polarisation and societal individualism. However, **culture itself has become a contested space for competing identities and ideologies, as cultural consumption shifts toward personalised, on-demand experiences.** Although culture is fundamental to democracy, it must itself be democratic to fulfil this critical role. If we strive for cultural institutions and a cultural provision that are representative of the communities in which they are embedded, **we must ask ourselves how effective our existing participatory systems are in engaging a diverse range of stakeholders in the governance, representation and production of culture and knowledge systems.**

The Transformative Potential of Participation

Participatory or socially engaged arts are often regarded as secondary to traditional forms of art, perceived as lacking the value associated with established artistic standards. This bias stems from aesthetic ideals that have historically defined “artistic quality” through rigid and narrow frameworks. In today’s interconnected world, however, notions of quality are expanding, moving towards a pluralistic, inclusive perspective that recognises art’s broader impact on society. In this vision, cultural value lies not only in the artwork itself but also in its transformative effects on individuals and communities, addressing inequality, fostering inclusion, and enhancing resilience.

Cultural Democracy

The concept of Cultural Democracy embraces this inclusivity, accessibility, and active citizen participation, aiming to make cultural creation and expression available to everyone in order to leave no-one behind. It encourages a plurality of voices and empowers communities to actively shape cultural narratives, fostering a diverse and representative cultural landscape. This approach — which started by including the idea of audience development as a process for creating a bridge among cultural institutions and people and has nowadays shifted towards the more inclusive paradigm of audience engagement — extends to who makes decisions, whose voices are amplified, and how culture is defined and supported by institutions, funders, and policymakers.

Cultural democracy is based on the principle of people’s legitimisation and enables marginalised voices and under-represented communities to influence cultural dialogue

and production, creating richer and more diverse cultural expressions. It thereby broadens cultural leadership by embracing diverse schools of thought and governance models that acknowledge different histories, experiences, and contributions.

However, implementing cultural democracy faces challenges, especially in overcoming institutional inertia and existing power dynamics within cultural organisations. Limited access to resources, systemic biases, and a narrow definition of culture can restrict opportunities for many communities to participate fully. Additionally, cultural gatekeepers may resist cultural democracy as a threat to established norms of artistic “quality” or aesthetic standards.

Cultural Leadership

Socially engaged artists and cultural practitioners are advancing these ideas, raising questions about culture’s role in creating positive social impact. **While often working outside mainstream recognition, these artists leave a profound mark on their communities, even without consistent support from policymakers and funders.** This creative response, or Cultural Leadership, is sorely needed to unleash the transformative potential of arts and culture amid the global ‘polycrisis’ marked by political tensions, wars, climate change, and rapid technological advancements. It calls for cultural policies that support culture’s intrinsic value rather than instrumentalising it solely for economic or political objectives, highlighting the disconnect between policymakers’ focus on immediate goals and the sector’s emphasis on fostering democracy, resilience, and the power to create compelling images of a better future.

The *State of Culture Report*¹ underscores the need for culture to reclaim its agency as a core partner for change. This agency of ‘cultural leadership’ is rooted in an approach of inclusivity, equity, and community-driven empowerment – principles that lie at the heart of the Porto Santo Charter. The *Porto Santo Charter*² reflects the commitment of European Cultural stakeholders to cultural participation by promoting inclusive, community-led cultural practices and advocating policies that support access, diversity, and the recognition of all cultural expressions across member states. It advocates for a framework that views culture not merely as a commodity or tradition but as an active, participatory practice where every voice and community can shape their own cultural experiences. By embracing these values, cultural leaders have the potential to foster a more diverse and interconnected global cultural landscape.

The challenge remains to build leadership that will allow cultural democracy to root out in society. Capacity building is needed, by collecting and analysing practice examples and building up support structures of peers to exchange ideas and share their experiences. Growing this new cultural leadership plays a crucial role in building this new environment, these ‘contact zones,’ where public debate is balanced and open to all.

In today’s intricate geopolitical environment, cultural leaders are confronted with numerous challenges demanding a thoughtful mix of creativity and strategic insight. Economic instability, changing political landscapes, and

social divisions have increased the need for a comprehensive approach within the cultural sector. Those leading socially engaged arts face these issues directly, requiring both visionary creativity and management skills to sustain initiatives that promote social change and withstand external pressures. Socially engaged practitioners have developed unique methods, combining creative practice, grassroots activism, community development, social design, and techniques from multiple fields to create innovative, hybrid “**socially engaged practices.**” These practices often go unrecognised and undervalued due to a lack of classification and documentation.

Contexts of Participatory Approaches

However, when examining cultural participation across different regions, significant differences emerge. In the Global North, culture often benefits from established infrastructure and governmental support, though access can still be influenced by socioeconomic status and policy frameworks. Conversely, in the Global South, participation in culture is frequently limited by resource constraints, unequal power dynamics, and legacies of colonial influence. These disparities – which can somehow be recognised also in the juxtaposition between urban and rural contexts – highlight the need for culturally democratic approaches that recognise and respond to the unique contexts and challenges faced by communities worldwide.

In the EU, cultural autonomy is increasingly under pressure from new threats to artistic freedom, sparking concern about the overlap between culture and politics. This issue

1 Culture Action Europe, State of Culture Report, Brussels 2024. https://cultureactioneurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/State-of-Culture-Report_final_version.pdf

2 Porto Santo Charter, Portuguese Presidency of the European Union, Porto Santo 2021.

arises partly due to political forces seeking to use culture as a tool to reinforce national identity through narrow perspectives — a role generally at odds with the cultural sector's focus. Traditionally, the cultural heritage sector has championed diverse interpretations of history to support today's inclusive societies. However, **the freedom of the arts is now also challenged by growing societal polarisation, greater public scrutiny of social issues, and limited space for open debate.** Unlike past challenges, today's primary threats to artistic freedom include self-censorship shaped by an instrumental view of culture, caution among artists and institutions in balancing creative expression with social responsibility, and the instability of sustaining a career within the sector.

In the context of the Global South, for instance in Latin America, the pressures on cultural autonomy and artistic freedom often stem from unique challenges linked to historical, economic, and political dynamics. Here, cultural expression can face state censorship, political repression, and, in some cases, corporate influence, as cultural production is often intertwined with pressing social and political issues, such as indigenous rights, economic inequality, and social justice. **Political forces in some countries may seek to control cultural narratives to reinforce national ideologies or diminish dissent, limiting diverse cultural expression that the sector might aim to uphold.** Additionally, societal polarisation and economic precarity make it difficult for artists and institutions to freely express critical perspectives, particularly those challenging dominant power structures.

Aims of Participatory Approaches

Amartya Sen³ argues that cultural participation should expand people's freedoms, allowing individuals to pursue meaningful lives through cultural practices that are significant to them. For Sen, cultural engagement contributes to individual well-being, helping people shape their identities and community roles, which can ultimately address social inequalities by enhancing personal agency and civic participation.

Arjun Appadurai⁴, on the other hand, brings attention to cultural production within a globalised context. His idea of the 'social imaginary' explores how culture influences people's ability to envision and work toward futures beyond immediate limitations, often in resistance to hegemonic power structures. By examining how cultural production — film, music, language — can challenge or transform social norms, Appadurai shows how **cultural expression becomes a means of reclaiming identity and negotiating power within and across societies.**

Both theorists emphasise the transformative potential of culture but through different lenses: Sen focuses on cultural freedom as a pathway to equality and democratic agency, while Appadurai views cultural production as a vehicle for challenging global inequities and fostering new narratives. Together, their ideas highlight how **cultural democracy and participation can empower communities to address systemic inequalities, making culture a critical foundation for social transformation.**

3 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York, 1999.

4 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, 1996.

Ways Forward

How can international, regional and local policy frameworks support a bottom-up transformation of institutional structures? Three main initiatives deserve sustained attention:

A global campaign coalition pushes for a **Stand-Alone Culture Goal** as part of the post-2030 Sustainable Development Agenda of the United Nations. This SDG '18,' a dedicated culture goal, would elevate the importance of culture in global discussions, akin to existing SDGs focused on health, education, and the environment. It would provide a framework for countries to develop cultural policies that promote diversity, creativity, and social cohesion. By establishing clear targets and indicators for cultural participation, preservation, and production, nations can align their policies with global standards, fostering a commitment to cultural sustainability and equity in access.

Secondly, **recognising culture as a global public good** will help make cultural resources and expressions accessible to all, transcending borders and socio-economic barriers. This concept encourages international cooperation to safeguard cultural heritage and promote diverse cultural expressions. Initiatives could include funding for cultural projects in underrepresented communities, international cultural exchange programmes, and support for artists and cultural practitioners worldwide. Such efforts would enhance cultural diplomacy and foster mutual understanding among nations.

And then, again, the Porto Santo Charter emphasises the need for cultural rights as part of the broader human rights agenda. By aligning with this charter, policies can support the active participation of diverse communities in cultural

life. This could involve creating funding opportunities for local cultural initiatives, promoting multilingualism, and ensuring that minority cultures are represented in cultural institutions. **By enhancing collaboration between governments, civil society, and cultural organisations, policymakers can foster a more inclusive cultural ecosystem that values diverse voices and perspectives.**

Recognising Precarity

Many socially engaged arts organisations have emerged from grassroots activism, motivated by a need to address social and cultural issues often neglected by institutional frameworks. These organisations frequently operate outside traditional capitalist models, prioritising community empowerment, the common good, and social impact over financial sustainability, which exposes them to financial and political instability. The success of community-centred cultural projects relies on fostering active participation, strong civic involvement, adaptable structures, and diverse funding sources; however, their efforts are often hampered by obstacles like bureaucratic barriers, political instability, and dependency on short-term project funding. To thrive, these organisations must navigate complex bureaucratic systems and challenge outdated funding models. Consequently, they constantly balance between stability and vulnerability. Although their work promotes community resilience and cultural renewal, they remain highly exposed to external pressures — political, economic, and social. In this precarious environment, their success depends on a strategic response to the intricate interplay of internal and external dynamics to maintain their impact.

Conclusion

In an era of profound social, economic, and environmental challenges, cultural leadership through cultural democracy offers a critical pathway toward building resilient, inclusive societies. The transformative role of socially engaged arts fosters democratic agency, bridging ideological divides, and amplifying marginalised voices. **The democratisation of culture requires rethinking the frameworks that define cultural value, encouraging active participation, and expanding cultural leadership to be more representative of diverse communities.** Socially engaged practitioners have demonstrated how cultural practices can address social inequality, foster inclusion, and enhance community resilience — yet they remain vulnerable to external pressures and institutional challenges.

Looking ahead, policymakers and cultural stakeholders must take decisive steps to support a sustainable cultural sector. Priorities include establishing a dedicated culture goal within the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, recognising culture as a Global Public Good, and upholding cultural rights as an extension of human rights. By aligning with initiatives such as the Porto Santo Charter, governments can foster policies that support diversity, equity, and local cultural empowerment.

For cultural democracy to take root, ongoing capacity-building, knowledge sharing, and the redesign of outdated funding frameworks are essential. Together, these efforts will create a foundation for future cultural leaders to thrive, ensuring a more democratic, inclusive, and resilient cultural landscape that contributes meaningfully to the well-being of all communities.

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SECTION 3

Why We Need European Alliances for Playwrights: Copyright Questions, Exchange on Contracts and Payments



BY

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Abstract

In the fragmented legal and institutional landscape of Europe, playwrights often face significant barriers when their work crosses national borders. **The absence of unified support structures makes it difficult for authors to understand their rights, negotiate fair contracts, and access professional networks, especially when working outside their home countries.** This paper explores the **urgent need for a European alliance for playwrights** — a collective platform that would provide centralised legal guidance, model contracts, a database of translators, and shared standards for authors' rights and payments.

Beyond legal and financial matters, the alliance could foster artistic exchange, increase the visibility of contemporary drama across linguistic and cultural divides, and advocate for stronger cultural policies at the European level. It would also support new models of cooperation through digital platforms, education programmes, and co-authorship recognition in translation. By analysing existing challenges and potential solutions, the paper argues that **such an alliance is not only beneficial but essential for building a fairer, more connected, and creatively vibrant European dramatic landscape.**

Introduction

A writer from Serbia whose work is staged in Italy, or an author from Poland invited to a residency in France, often finds themselves without clear information about their (and others') rights, remuneration standards, contract models, or options for protection in the event of copyright infringement. Intensive international collaboration and cultural

exchange are the result of numerous (European) projects that offer artists the opportunity to live and create in a country that is not their own. However, the challenges authors face on this journey go beyond linguistic, genre, or aesthetic concerns and enter the realm of copyright, contractual relations, taxation, translation, and international visibility. Institutional protection of playwrights is often fragmented, inconsistent across different countries, and ultimately – insufficient. In this context, the need to create a European Alliance of Playwrights – an alliance that would systemically, categorically, in solidarity, and transnationally protect and promote the status of playwrights – becomes not only useful but essential. The alliance discussed in this paper could encompass a wide range of areas: from providing legal protection for authors and centralised databases of contract models, to establishing common fee standards and platforms for the promotion and visibility of contemporary drama, and advocating for the interests of playwrights before EU institutions and other decision-makers. This paper explores potential answers to the question of why we need a European Alliance of Playwrights, what functions it could assume, and how it could contribute to strengthening the position of authors, developing new practices, and enhancing mutual connectivity.

Copyright, Contracts, and Legal Protection

Although there are several networks and initiatives that bring together playwrights and translators (e.g., Fabulamundi, the International Playwrights' Forum (IPF) within the International Theatre Institute, Eurodram, European Theatre Convention), none of them address one

of the fundamental problems playwrights face: the lack of knowledge about copyright and contractual options in an international context (often even in the local context – but that is another issue). When our plays are staged in a country that is not our own, we often lack clear information about what kind of contract we can expect and request, what our rights are, what fees we can realistically expect, how the legal frameworks in that country work, or how to react in case of misuse. At the national level, there are often associations of this kind, but they usually lack the capacity to offer support beyond their own legal systems.

A European Alliance of Playwrights could play a key role in centralising and making legal information accessible – through translations of laws, practical guides for negotiating contracts, explanations of tax systems, and contact with lawyers specialised in copyright law.

It may sound complicated and expensive, but perhaps it's not so hard to start? A few writers from each country could be enough to write and regularly update a relevant guide based on their contracting experiences in their own country, while partner organisations, theatres, alliances, and associations could work with their legal experts to prepare and update legal frameworks and explanations of tax systems. This would enable members to quickly and easily find out how to protect their rights regardless of where their play is being staged. It would also be significant to have a central legal team within the Alliance. For example, when a play is staged without permission, when the author's name is omitted, or when the agreed fee is not paid – the Alliance could respond on behalf of the author, which would carry more weight than an individual complaint. This would significantly strengthen

the negotiating position of writers and reduce the number of cases in which we are left unprotected.

The Agency Role of the Alliance

In many countries, there are agencies that represent writers, negotiate contracts on their behalf, protect their rights, and assist with promotion. However, such agencies are not evenly distributed across Europe, nor is this practice equally present in all European countries. Many authors — especially those from smaller countries or the independent scene — never have access to this kind of representation.

A European Alliance could offer a hybrid model — somewhere between a professional association and a collective agency — that would provide a form of representation for member writers. This would not mean displacing existing agencies or commercialising the Alliance, but rather **complementing them on the international level**, especially in cases where the author lacks similar support. For example, what if members were given the opportunity to submit their works within a set timeframe, and then a selection of the 10 best were chosen, with the Alliance dedicating that year to intensively promoting and representing those works and authors — opening up opportunities for international productions and far greater visibility than any individual author might achieve on their own? Over time, the quality guarantee established through such a process would allow the agency function of the Alliance to grow stronger, giving authors the opportunity to be actively promoted, represented, and have someone negotiate on their behalf, at least for a defined period.

Standardisation of Contracts and Fees

One of the most concrete ways to strengthen the negotiating position of playwrights is to develop model contracts and pricing lists that would be shared across Europe — or at least made available as a reference. Standardised contracts, tailored to different types of collaborations (production, public readings, translation, publishing, adaptation) and translated into multiple languages, would allow writers to negotiate in an informed and equal manner — regardless of their country of origin. To avoid generalisations, I'll offer a personal example: I have been thrilled with the fee offered in a country with a higher standard of living than mine, only to realise later that I was severely underpaid by that country's standards — thus harming both myself and my colleagues there. Or the reverse: when an author from a wealthier country comes to one with a lower standard, by whose standards is the payment calculated? It often happens, for instance, that a theatre in Serbia pays more for the rights to a foreign play than to a local author. Is that fair? How is it suddenly possible to allocate more money for a foreign author, but not for a local one? Should writers show solidarity with the fees their colleagues in a given country receive, or should standardisation follow a different model? There are examples of good practice where national associations have standardised minimum fees for authors, which served as a tool for negotiations (though not necessarily for achieving standardised fee levels!). A European Alliance could build on this idea and establish basic reference fees at the European level — taking into account differences in local economies, but **maintaining a core principle: that every author knows the minimum value of their work.**

Education, Residencies, and Knowledge Exchange

In addition to legal and institutional support, the Alliance would play an important role in the professional development of playwrights themselves. International residencies, workshops, and training programmes for dramatic writers are not uncommon, but information about them is often scattered, inconsistently available, and frequently fails to reach those who need it most. One of the key areas of the Alliance's work, therefore, would be **the creation of a centralised database of available programmes** – with up-to-date information on deadlines, application requirements, working languages, available stipends, and feedback from past participants. Such a database would be valuable both for emerging writers just entering the field and for more experienced playwrights seeking new opportunities. In addition, the Alliance could organise masterclasses, lectures, and experience-sharing sessions among writers based on the principle of horizontal learning. The network could also serve as a space for mentorship – connecting senior, established authors with those who are still developing, fostering collegial solidarity and a stronger community.

Visibility, Digital Platforms, and the Promotion of Contemporary Drama

One of the greatest challenges faced by contemporary playwrights – especially those writing in less widely spoken languages – is how to reach directors, theatres, and producers beyond their own country's borders. Although digital tools now offer many possibilities that make this path considerably easier than it once was, there is still no strong, functional European platform that systematically showcases

contemporary authors and their works. A European Alliance could develop a digital database of contemporary plays, featuring well-organised summaries, information about available translations, author contact details, and advanced search options by theme, genre, language, length, number of characters, and other relevant criteria. Such a platform would not only serve as a long-term archive but also as a tool for active networking. For example, would production and networking increase if directors and theatres/producers could indicate the types of plays they are interested in, allowing them to connect with one another and develop new collaborations based on shared interests? The same platform could also host digital pitch sessions, the promotion of new works, and individual playwright profiles.

Translation and the Status of Translators

Translating a literary work – including a play – requires a deep understanding of the text's context, style, and rhythm, especially in genres where rhythm is crucial, such as comedy. In this process, **the translator becomes a co-author, a dramaturg**. However, their status is often marginalised: translators are frequently not clearly credited, there are no standardised fees, and they are not equally involved in the production process. The *Playground for New Voices* project, which emerged from the Fabulamundi network, also addresses this issue by emphasising the collaborative creative process among authors, directors, translators, and actors. If we want greater international visibility for playwrights and a broader circulation of plays across Europe, we simply cannot achieve that without skilled and dedicated translators. The European Alliance could significantly

contribute to improving the visibility and protection of translators within the field of dramatic literature. The first step would be to create a database of translators specialised in contemporary drama, with references, working languages, experience, and contact information. This would allow authors and theatres to directly connect with translators who understand the specificities of dramatic writing. Additionally, the Alliance could develop model contracts that clearly define the rights and obligations of translators as co-authors, as well as mechanisms to ensure proper recognition and fair compensation. By recognising translation as a quintessentially artistic act without which authors cannot attain international visibility, the Alliance would help raise awareness of the vital role translators play.

Lobbying, Cultural Policy, and a Shared Identity

Protecting the interests of playwrights and improving their position cannot be achieved in isolation — it requires a systematic and collective approach at the European level. A European Alliance would play a key role as the organised voice of writers within EU institutions and other relevant bodies, advocating for their demands related to copyright, funding, and cultural policies. Similar networks, such as Culture Action Europe, have shown that lobbying at the European level is both effective and essential for influencing legislation and standards that directly impact artists and their rights. A unified approach also provides access to various funds and grants that would otherwise be difficult for individual authors or small organisations to obtain.

Beyond practical matters of rights and finance, the Alliance could also serve as a space for building a **shared**

European cultural identity — if that is what we desire. Through the exchange and promotion of contemporary European drama, we simultaneously explore what makes European drama relevant and contemporary, how it transcends national borders, and how it creates **a new, broader common stage**. How might our writing be affected if we actively followed which texts are being most successfully “pitched” and produced across Europe — those that manage to break through national boundaries and achieve international success? Would this necessarily have a positive impact, or might it perhaps lead us irreversibly away from our local context?

Conclusion

In a world where everything is changing, where the boundaries of genres — and even of art itself — are dissolving, and where the future of everyone and everything, including playwrights as such, is uncertain (we did not have space in this paper to address issues like digitalisation, or the rise of tools like ChatGPT as potential authors of dramatic texts), playwrights face numerous challenges. Perhaps it's best to start with the basics: protection of authorship rights, access to information, and the ability to negotiate on equal footing. **A European Playwrights' Alliance would undoubtedly be useful, as any form of collective organising is, but it is likely also necessary — as a bridge between different legal systems, cultural environments, and economic realities.** Through legal support, representation, education, digital tools, and a unified presence before institutions, the Alliance might not completely transform the position of playwrights, but it could enable us to create, share, and

protect our work with confidence and dignity — connecting with and learning from colleagues across Europe, and forming a new voice of a unified European stage that can reach audiences across the continent.



Fabulamundi New Voices Community Meeting
in Venice, October 2023

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SECTION 3

Manifesto or Not Manifesto

BY

MAGDALENA BARILE

Playwright (Italy)

Writing a manifesto on contemporary playwriting is no small feat, especially within a community of 19 playwrights, each with their own sensibility, vision, and approach to theatre. However, structuring a collective creative process based on reflection and sharing has made this attempt — still incomplete — **an interesting journey, opening up a broader conversation on the state of the art.**

Which Manifesto Are You Today?

The idea of writing a manifesto was launched in a group call on the online collaboration tool Basecamp, where the Fabulamundi Community gathers before and after live meetings. At that time, each of us was invited to contribute to shaping the workdays of our future sessions. We had recently met in Venice (17–19 October 2023), where our sessions focused on “a more sustainable theatre,” and our next meeting was scheduled in Paris (19–22 February 2024) to discuss copyright laws, working conditions, contracts, wages, and opportunities. The writing sessions for a possible manifesto were facilitated by the author of this text.

In Paris, the Fabulamundi Community’s work was hosted by Théâtre Ouvert. Nine famous manifestos from art history and civil rights movements were used as models to guide our reflection. The first session was a playful exercise to spark dialogue: *Which Manifesto Are You Today?* Each playwright could identify with one of these historical manifestos and explain their choice, helping to feed the discussion.

From the *Dada Manifesto* (1918), celebrating chaos and irrationality, to the *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), rooted in dreams; from the *Black Art Movement* (1966), advocating for

civil rights and racial inclusion, to the *Theatre of the Absurd Manifesto* (1960), foundational for many 20th-century playwrights; from the radical feminism of the *SCUM Manifesto* (1967) to the *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), promoting equality between humans and post-humans; from *Queer Nation* (1990), demanding visibility and representation for the LGBTQIA+ community, to the *Intersectionality Manifesto* (2009), addressing overlapping oppressions, and finally, to the *Last Generation Manifesto* (2021), a global call for climate action.

By analysing these manifestos, we identified key themes, styles, and forms to guide our own.

Towards a Manifesto of the Fabulamundi Community

In the next phase, we faced a fundamental question: Do we really want to write a manifesto? We debated whether the term felt too arrogant or ambitious, considering alternatives like Hand-book or Handy-festo. Perhaps it could be a breviary, a diary, or a collection of scattered notes. If we wanted it to encourage reading, the title of “Manifesto” would make it more appealing.

After an intense debate, we voted in favour of creating a **shared text to represent our vision of contemporary playwriting** — a collection of ideas that unified our work, enriched by insights from industry experts over our three years together of Fabulamundi Project. We would decide later what to call it. The temptation to name it Manifesto remained strong, but from that moment on, we called it the not quite a manifesto.

Before drafting this *not quite a manifesto*, we tackled crucial questions:

- **The target audience:** Who are we addressing? The theatre community, playwrights, or specifically young people and students?
- **The style:** Should it be practical or inspirational? A utopia or a concrete tool?
- **The form:** Should it be concise or detailed? Clear bullet points or in-depth reflections? What length? How much flexibility?
- **The language:** Two key points emerged: flexibility and accessibility. It was decided that the not quite a manifesto should be adaptable over time, translated into multiple languages, and understandable for young playwrights.

What Does the Fabulamundi Community Really Stand For?

It was true, we were all different. Unlike other artistic groups that have historically shaped manifestos, we did not share the same education, activism, or common projects till now.

We were a diverse group in age and background, brought together by different and random factors, now called upon to define our collective purpose. Theatre and playwriting were our common ground, but was theatre alone enough to hold us together?

We agreed that theatre is always political and still has the power to inspire transformative action and influence social, cultural, and political debates. To be a playwright is also to be an activist. There is no tolerance for social, racial, gender, or ability-based discrimination.

In Paris, we began the drafting of the *not yet a manifesto*. We divided into four subgroups, each focusing on

a key thematic area. These groups were formed based on the inclinations shown during the *Which Manifesto Are You Today?* game. This allowed us to address contemporary playwriting from different perspectives, creating a foundation rich in nuances — paying homage to past manifestos while projecting ideas toward the future.

One group focused on what we want and what we stand against, defining principles and necessary breaks from the past. A second group worked on inclusivity, diversity, and intersectionality, exploring how theatre amplifies marginalised voices. A third group examined the relationship between humans and technology, questioning digital narratives and interconnectivity. Finally, the fourth group reflected on green theatre and dramaturgy that includes other species and ecological perspectives. After two collective work sessions, this was the result.

Open Draft #1 — 20 February 2024

by (in alphabetical order): **Magdalena Barile** (Italy), **Constance de Saint Remy** (France), **Nathalie Fillion** (France), **Eva Geatti** (Italy), **Alexandra Koch** (Austria), **David Košťák** (Czech Republic), **Patrik Lazić** (Serbia), **Michaela Michailov** (Romania), **Ewa Mikula** (Poland), **Oriol Morales i Pujolar** (Spain), **Roberto Scarpetti** (Italy), **Kateřina Součková** (Czech Republic), **Biljana Srbijanovic** (Serbia), **Bernhard Studlar** (Austria), **Helena Tornero** (Spain), **Ingeborg von Zadow** (Germany), **Anna Wakulik** (Poland), **Elise Wilk** (Romania), **Stefan Wipplinger** (Germany).

Experiment with the sequence of sentences, embracing contributions from everyone

First part: The Chaos of Art

We call for a theatre that inhabits the present time.
We call for a theatre where language doesn't matter.
A theatre where language is everything.
We believe in theatre that starts on the streets and ends at home.
We believe in theatre that is like a box of matches.

Second part

Diversity begins with your very first word. Words create reality.
Be aware of yourself to be available to others.
Sustainability begins with your very first stage direction. Your narrative builds sustainability.
Be curious as a cat, effortless as a capybara, and spit like a llama.

Third part

We belong to a new community of human and machine, physical and digital, hybrids and chimeras.
We live in a digital era. Unlearn, learn to ask questions, and press the reset button.
We belong to a network that connects every point to every other point, with non-hierarchical entry and exit points.

Our writing approach is partial and temporary. It is the free, expansive movement of grass, constantly connecting infinite points.
Our knowledge is rhizomatic.

Fourth part: There Is No End

Let's be realistic — let's ask for the impossible.
Humans are responsible for the environment; playwrights are responsible for the thoughts they leave behind. We are responsible for our culture.
The last shall be first — there is no end.

An Unfinished Manifesto

After the Paris gathering, there was another meeting in Belgrade (4-7 October 2024). There, the momentum of the Manifesto waned. We tried to revisit the structure and make it more organic, but the idea of finding a new democratic approach to revise it proved difficult — especially with growing concerns about whether we could find a common voice. Some suggested transforming the document into a collection of thoughts on teaching playwriting, a manual informed by our international experiences as workshop facilitators.

This impasse raises some reflections. **If the attempt was uncertain, it is because we live in uncertain times, and the perspectives shaped by different geographies and artistic sensibilities are complex.** Scepticism prevailed — those who see such an endeavour as too ambitious or rhetorical. Yet, I remain convinced that this attempt was meaningful and still could be. **Without believing in the immortality**

of our work, it is essential today to write the foundational values and vision of a theatre that must abandon its divisive function and embrace a unifying one.

Finding a single voice is difficult, even when united by the same principles. **Artists, by nature, challenge reality rather than pacify it.** But there are moments when artists can lower their individual voices to raise a collective one. I believe that today, in the face of global crises and the threats to democracy in Europe, there is a shared disorientation — one that needs to be expressed. Taking to the streets, signing shared documents, and defending rights, inclusion, and peace has never been more important.

To be European artists means engaging with a historical stratification of issues and values. Perhaps the deadlock in writing our manifesto stems from a lack of conviction among pessimistic artists that they can make a real difference. A new manifesto may not make the difference, but it can serve as an example of democratic engagement, a testimony against the authoritarian tendencies gaining ground in today's world. Peace, democracy, and freedom become more concrete when embodied in people, places, and a public declaration of principles.

The pressing political and environmental crises of our time demand a return to writing manifestos. And who's to say we won't find another opportunity to do just that? Our *maybe-one-day* manifesto is not the end of an endeavour but **a process in constant transformation.** I suggest we teach our young students to write manifestos to understand better how writing can be collective and transformative: investigating and putting into words what unites us is invaluable — especially when so many aspects of reality are unravelling.



Section IV

The Vision and Foundations of Fabulamundi

New Voices Community meeting in Paris,
19–22 February 2024
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SECTION 4

Spreading Playwriting Throughout Europe: Fabulamundi Over the Years

BY

VÍCTOR MUÑOZ I CALAFELL

Responsible of International Activities, Sala Beckett/
Obrador Internacional de Dramatúrgia (Spain)

The first email I have from Claudia Di Giacomo, the driving force behind the Fabulamundi project and so many other cultural activities, dates from 23 July 2014. Just a few days before, at Sala Beckett we had presented, in the form of staged readings, four texts by authors from other countries that were part of the first edition of the Fabulamundi project: **Magdalena Barile** (Italy), **David Lescot** (France), **Alina Nelega** (Romania) and **Ewald Palmetschofer** (Germany). Can anyone imagine a better dream team to start a European playwriting project? If it seems strange that the first exchange of emails with the project leader took place only after the project had concluded, it is because Sala Beckett was not one of the partners in the first edition of Fabulamundi. Playwriting Europe.

In late 2013, the project's Catalan partner in Spain, the GREC Festival of Barcelona, asked the Sala Beckett if it wanted to take charge of producing the four staged readings corresponding to the GREC, as due to the festival's size, it taking charge of them was not looking feasible. The Sala Beckett, on the other hand, was at that time a small theatre in Barcelona — just a single stage with a hall with 70 seats — focusing on contemporary drama, especially Catalan, but also very attentive to everything happening abroad.

We have always believed that for the evolution of Catalan playwriting, it is necessary for Catalan playwrights to have their plays premiered abroad, but, at the same time, for authors from other countries to come to Barcelona, so that they can get to know them and establish ties. And this, which on paper seems so simple, is not always easy, basically for economic reasons.

That is why, when Ramon Simó, then director of the GREC Festival, proposed to the director of the Sala Beckett, Toni Casares, to take charge of these staged readings, we immediately said yes: not only did it fit in perfectly with our goals, but we also hoped it would enable us to **develop links with other European theatres and get to know new writers and plays**. And so it was. The different editions of the project have served to get to know authors we had never heard of, to get to know texts that have broken our preconceived ideas about dramatic writing and, above all, they have allowed us to meet other programmers, directors, and producers from all over Europe with whom we have been able to establish and develop a true relationship of trust.

These days, if we want to know which plays have been premiered in France — for example — during a particular season, we no longer need to resort to media critiques or texts put out by French publishers: we can simply ask our colleagues from the Théâtre Ouvert and La Mousson d'été, who are members of the project, and we soon receive a list of titles and authors. Thanks to Fabulamundi, **a true European playwriting network has been created** (which was the project's initial goal) that has not only benefited playwrights, but also artistic directors and theatre programmers.

Sala Beckett, therefore, did not join Fabulamundi as a full member until its second edition, which was subtitled *Crossing Generations* and which aimed to explore, as its name suggests, how plays from the participating countries have portrayed the relationships between different generations. It was an edition that could be described as continuing along the same lines as the previous one, since, although the staged readings of the first edition were replaced by

semi-productions (which imply a more developed result) and were accompanied by artistic residencies of the respective authors, the work consisted of continuing to propose a series of playwrights and choosing a selection of plays to be presented at the respective theatres. However, for Sala Beckett it was an extremely useful edition, as it allowed us to get to know not only international writers and texts, but above all the rest of the project members.

Despite our common interest in contemporary playwriting, the members of Fabulamundi are of very diverse natures (ranging from festivals to somewhat classical repertory theatres), and the regular meetings we attended made it possible to get to know each other and develop relationships of trust that, in the long run, have borne fruit.

From the very start, the meetings were intense, as we did not always agree on the way we believed things should be done, sometimes we even argued, but always from the conviction that what we were proposing was the best option for promoting contemporary playwriting everywhere and from the desire to work in favour of the playwrights, who are at the heart of the Fabulamundi project and who must be its major beneficiaries. And of course, always from the angle of admiration for each other's work and of mutual recognition.

Moreover, this edition also allowed us to get to know the inside workings of Fabulamundi, in other words, a project of European scope that receives the support of Creative Europe, which implies a series of duties not always easy to fulfil for people or institutions not necessarily well acquainted with the way such European projects work. It was the first time that we had participated in a project of this type, and it was a challenge, in terms of both content

and organisation. But we learned a great deal from it, and it prepared us for the third edition of *Fabulamundi*.

From 2017 to 2020 (although, in fact, it ended a year later due to the upheaval caused to all theatres by the COVID pandemic), the third edition of *Fabulamundi*. Playwriting Europe took place, revolving around the theme of *Beyond Borders?* (a very pertinent topic considering the migratory trends that Europe has been experiencing in recent years). It was a **complex edition that posed a real logistical challenge**. For the first time, we were members of a large-scale project, with 15 partners and 10 participating dramaturgies/countries and other twin partners in eight countries more (an outstanding number of 18 countries involved), and with a budget of over 3.2 million euros.

It was a challenge that was highly enriching, not only for the playwrights who took part in the project (10 for each dramaturgy/country) but also for the partners, since it involved personally meeting the playwrights proposed by the respective theatres or festivals. As a result, for a year, we had the privilege of travelling to the different countries of the partners that made up this edition of the project, getting to know the respective festivals or theatres and, above all, holding interviews and personalised conversations with each of the playwrights taking part. All of this accompanied by the possibility of seeing shows in each country in their respective languages.

In this edition, each member had the freedom to decide which activities they wanted to do, but there was a generous budget, so the proposed activities had to be of a certain scope and had to involve all the partners. Sala Beckett, for example, produced seven semi-productions, accompanied

by the visit of each author — one for each dramaturgy/country participating in the project (except its own) — and then, from these, it chose one to turn into a full production. Considering the characteristics of the activities, it was important to know the authors to be able to make a suitable choice, that is, to be able to select the author — with their interests, their training or their thoughts — that we thought could most interest the spectators of the respective countries. And therefore, it was essential not only to know the plays proposed for each author (or their synopsis, if not translated into any of the languages we knew), but also the playwrights themselves. As a programmer, it was an extraordinary and very enriching experience.

And the fact is that, although there are European dramaturgies that, for reasons of geography or renown, were largely known to us even before the start of the project (in our case, for example, we could cite French, German or Italian, i.e., those from Western Europe), others (Polish, Romanian or Czech) are very distant, and their plays rarely reach our country's theatres.

This third edition, therefore, was a luxury opportunity for us, as theatre programmers, to get to know some of the most prominent authors and plays from these countries and, at the same time, make them known to the respective audiences. **For the first time, Sala Beckett found itself immersed in a project that functioned as a real dramaturgical network between the different European member countries and that really served to internationalise the respective playwrights.** This edition should have ended in a great festival in Rome in which each member would have brought one of the shows created over these four years, in addition to thinking about

complementary activities. It would have really been an essential meeting point for anyone interested in contemporary European playwriting. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic made it impossible. It was replaced by an online festival made up of talks, conferences, debates and interviews that, although it allowed discussions and relationships between the different players involved in the project to be maintained and deepened, could not replace what had so characterised the third edition: personal contact and conversations over coffee.

And finally, we come to the fourth edition, the current one, which is subtitled *New Voices*. On this occasion, we have returned to a small-format project, but, for the first time, it does not focus on the promotion of playwrights but, rather, on **the promotion of theatrical writing and creation among young people aged between 16 and 27 years old.** It is a change in direction that makes perfect sense for Fabulamundi, as it represents a logical continuity after this project of enormous dimensions: **after promoting European textual dramaturgy among professionals and the general public, we are now promoting textual dramaturgy among young people, i.e., the playwrights — and also the audiences — of the future.**

The authors who will fill theatre programmes in the coming years will have to emerge from among them, and, therefore, it is completely logical that we work to make them more knowledgeable about theatre (and, more specifically, dramatic writing) and provide them with dramaturgical techniques and tools for inventing stories. In addition, youth theatre is established and enjoying very good health in certain countries (such as Germany and France) but is

practically non-existent in others (such as Spain). This edition of the project, therefore, may be a very good opportunity to promote theatre aimed especially at young people at our theatre venues.

The history of the Fabulamundi. Playwriting Europe project is, therefore, the story of a journey. A journey by a group of institutions and people who believe in theatre as a means to get to know ourselves better as human beings, and be able to change the society in which we live, as well as having the firm conviction that there is a powerful and interesting European theatre beyond the usual recurring playwrights that fill our programmes (who, moreover, tend to be the same everywhere).

Convinced that Europe will be nothing if not diverse, and that establishing links between different European cultural traditions is a way of strengthening Europe, Fabulamundi has been making European playwriting known to audiences and theatre professionals alike for over 10 years. Our greatest hope is that there will be many more to come.

SECTION 4

A Journey Full of Amazing Meetings

BY

TAMARA SUSOI

Artistic Consultant, Teatrul Odeon

Odeon Theatre in Bucharest, Romania, one of the most significant repertory theatres subsidised by the municipality of Bucharest, has a tradition of almost 80 years, a permanent troupe of actors and around 30 very diverse productions every season that could run for many years. At the beginning, Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe started as a small alternative programme in our repertory to become, over the past 10 years, stronger with every new edition and **one of the most important programmes in our recent history.**

In numbers, in the previous three editions together with the pilot edition, Odeon presented 12 new translated plays as public readings, in the presence of the foreign authors and produced three shows. One of them — *Gardenia* by Polish author Elzbieta Chowaniec, directed by Zoltán Balázs (Hungary), which had its premiere in 2018, is still in our repertory as one of the most successful shows. It participated in the most important theatre festivals in the country, where it received many awards and was also invited to international festivals in Tunis, Budapest, Kishinev and even China.

But the successful story of Fabulamundi goes beyond Odeon's scene, as the plays translated and published in the frame of the project were also staged in other theatres in Bucharest or other important cities in the country. The well-known Romanian director Radu Afrim staged *Trois ruptures* by Rémi De Vos in Sf. Gheorghe and *House of Chocolate* by David Drabek in Craiova. Vlad Cristache directed *La Rivincita* by Michele Santeramo in Piatra Neamt and *Ombraș* by Marília Samper at the National Theatre in Bucharest. *Nunzio* by Spiro Scimone had three different productions in Bucharest and now is still in the repertory of the National Theatre — *You Say Tomato* by Joan Yago.

The fourth edition brings further trajectories and discoveries. Besides the abilities and skills provided to the very young and recent voices in dramaturgy, the actors of Odeon were involved in a **completely new approach for them**. They were exposed to a different challenge by **Mihaela Michailov**, who leads the workshops, to **become more vulnerable and share personal stories that were fictionalised and read in front of the audience**.

All the reading performances that took place so far were very emotional for both the participants on stage and for the members of the audience, and always very appreciated by a full house. **The seeds planted during this work begun at Odeon have already produced new effects.** Two of the monologues written during the workshops were expanded into monodramas, one has been published, and one was used as a script for a short movie. I am sure that we will hear more in the future about some of the names that debuted on the Odeon stage on the occasion of the Fabulamundi project.



Gardenia by Elzbieta Chowaniec,
directed by Zoltan Balazs,
Actresses Paula Niculita, Simona Popescu, Ioana Marcoiu
and Antoaneta Zaharia © Mihaela Tulea

SECTION 4

Listening to the Future: Fabulamundi Beyond the Stage

BY

VALENTINA DE SIMONE

Projet Manager, PAV (Italy)

Over the years, Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe has grown from a network into something far more vital: a living ecosystem of ideas, people, and stories. With its latest edition, *New Voices*, the project once again reminds us **that the stage is not an endpoint, but an open invitation — a space of tension, resonance, and limitless potential**. Fabulamundi offers not only a toolkit of insights into how contemporary theatre can evolve, but also an exploration of how it serves society in ways that reach far beyond the stage.

At its core, Fabulamundi is grounded in a belief: that **theatre should reflect the diversity and complexity of the world we live in**. Not as a symbolic gesture, but as a tangible commitment. This means amplifying underrepresented voices, creating space for perspectives that often go unheard, and fostering dialogue across differences. It means treating writing not merely as a deliverable, but as an **ongoing process of care, inquiry, and reinvention**.

We are not merely professionals working across different countries — we are a collective of artists, institutions, and cultural operators united by the belief that **cross-border collaboration is not only possible, but essential**. In a time when division too often becomes the default, international artistic exchange reaffirms the value of genuine human connection. It demonstrates that dialogue is still possible, that it is still worthwhile to create spaces where uncertainty is welcomed, and where asking questions matters more than finding answers.

Seen through this lens, **contemporary dramaturgy becomes a space for risk and boldness**. We've often been drawn to texts that are unfinished, imperfect, still in the process of becoming. Why? Because they are alive. Because

they reveal something essential about the present: fractured, unstable, yet still reaching toward coherence and understanding. A play is not just a script; it's a landscape. It shifts, evolves, and resists containment.

Through years of shared work, we've learned that supporting playwrights goes far beyond showcasing their work. It means co-creating an environment rooted in trust and mutual care. **Nothing meaningful in dramaturgy happens quickly.** It demands the slowness of deep listening, the patience to read between the lines, and the openness to be surprised. It means learning to sit with discomfort — both our own and that of others.

The Page Is Not the Beginning

One of Fabulamundi's key insights is that **the page is not a cage — it's a threshold.** It is not the whole of the work, but a trace, a proposition, a portal. For emerging writers and theatre-makers, this can be a liberating idea: the creative process doesn't begin with the text, and it doesn't end there either. **Dramaturgy becomes a way of thinking — a method of mapping how we live and move through the world.**

Imperfection is a Strength

In a cultural climate that often prizes polish over authenticity, Fabulamundi reminds us that the raw, the incomplete, and the unresolved often carry the deepest truths. Imperfection is not a failure. It is friction. And friction generates heat. These are the texts that unsettle, provoke, and refuse easy interpretation. For those outside the network: dare to share unfinished work. Trust the process.

Listening Is a Creative Act

Perhaps one of the most profound lessons of Fabulamundi is that listening — real, sustained, generous listening — is a form of creation. Curation here is not about taste; it's about care. Listening to the writer, the text, the cultural context, and the unsaid becomes the foundation of the artistic process. At a time of content overload, this commitment to attentiveness is not only refreshing — it's essential.

Networks as Dramaturgies of Encounter

Though rooted in Europe, the logic of Fabulamundi is globally resonant. International collaboration is not just structural — it's aesthetic, relational, and deeply political. **The network becomes a dramaturgy in its own right: a system of encounters, exchanges, and shared imagination.** Translation, difference, and cultural friction are not hindrances — they are generative forces. For artists everywhere, this is an invitation to build networks not only to distribute work but to expand vision.

Dramaturgy as a Political Gesture

By elevating dissent, complexity, and multiplicity, Fabulamundi reaffirms that **contemporary playwriting is inherently political.** Not because it offers slogans or solutions, but because it questions assumptions, challenges forms, and holds space for ambiguity. For those creating theatre today, the most urgent question might not be "What is this play about?" but **"What does this play make possible?"**

Beyond the specific geography of the project, these ideas reflect a broader ethos: that theatre is not a static

object but a living conversation. That the creative process is not about perfection, but about connection. **What truly matters is the environment in which art is made. Is it inclusive? Generous? Open to discomfort? Does it allow itself to be changed by voices unlike its own?**

Fabulamundi also reminds us of the necessity of joy. Amid the weight of bureaucracy, deadlines, representation politics, and institutional pressures, **joy can be a subversive force.** Creating space for laughter, for freedom, for playful experimentation — this too is dramaturgical work. It's what sustains creativity over time.

In the end, what resonates most beyond Fabulamundi is not a set of texts or events, but a way of working — a way of being in the world. Collaboration is a muscle that must be exercised. Trust takes time. But when cultivated, it becomes transformative. The project teaches us that supporting playwrights isn't about judgment; it's about accompaniment. It's about returning, again and again, to the word as something living — fragile, defiant, generative.

So, as one edition of Fabulamundi draws to a close, its legacy isn't a finished archive of plays, but a commitment to process. A reminder that new voices aren't just emerging — they're already here.

We just need to listen.

And keep listening.



Fabulamundi New Voices Community Meeting
in Rome, May 2023
© Hecor Rodriguez Manchego

Biographies



Magdalena Barile (1978) is a playwright, screenwriter, and teacher. She heads the Playwriting Program at Civica Scuola di Teatro Paolo Grassi in Milan. Her plays are produced by leading Italian companies and translated into several languages. She writes for television and teaches playwriting and screenwriting at top Italian arts academies. Her latest book, *Gentleman Anne*, is a collection of feminist plays published by Vanda Edizioni.



Erell Blouët, after working for seven years in the field of cultural diplomacy (Alliances françaises, French institutes, and embassies abroad), joined La Mousson d'été in 2019 as a communication officer with a mission to strengthen its international collaborations, especially with the Fabula-mundi Playwriting Europe and Tintas Frescas (South America) networks. She has been the structure's general secretary since November 2021.



Valentina De Simone is a freelance journalist and theatre critic. She holds a Master's in Arts, Music and Performing Arts from Roma Tre University, and a first-level Master's in Cultural Journalism from the National Academy of Dramatic Art "Silvio d'Amico" in Rome. She joined PAV in 2017 as project manager of the European cooperation projects in the field of contemporary playwriting and performing arts.



Piersandra Di Matteo is a member of PerLA - Performance Epistemologies Research Lab, and SSH I Sound Studies Hub at the Università Iuav of Venice, where she teaches Curating Performing Arts. Her interests range from contemporary theatre to the politics of listening, from the practice of curatorship to accessibility. Romeo Castellucci's closest theoretical collaborator, she has been the artistic director of Short Theatre (Rome, 2021–2024), and Atlas of Transitions Biennale (Bologna, 2017–2020).

Magdalena Barile © Mario Zanaria, Erell Blouët © Helena Mikaelian, Valentina De Simone © Hector Rodriguez Manchego, Piersandra Di Matteo © Luca Mattei



Lars Ebert is Secretary General of Culture Action Europe and advocates for strong cultural policies in Europe. He was co-director of H401 in Amsterdam and deputy director of the European League of Institutes of the Arts. Lars has a specific interest in participatory practices and art-based research, holds a postgraduate degree in theology, is a frequent speaker and facilitator, publishes regularly and serves on the board of various organisations in the areas of culture, education and research.



Rolf Kemnitzer is a director, author, and cultural manager in Berlin's independent theatre scene. Since 2014, he has been the artistic director of the Interkulturelle Theaterzentrum Berlin association. He also works as a director of several professional and amateur theatre groups and serves as an organiser and facilitator of numerous projects, ranging from the "Garbage Museum" to a Community Centre.



Pavla Klouzalová studied General Anthropology at Charles University in Prague and Production at DAMU. During her more than 10 years of experience at the theatre, she worked in the positions of executive production, sales manager, assistant director, production manager and producer. She has been working at the LETÍ Theatre since 2016 as a financial manager. Since 2022, she has also worked there as a general director.



Patrik Lazić (1995) is a Serbo-Croatian theatre director and playwright. He graduated with honours from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, where he also completed his master's degree in directing and is currently working as an associate. He has been a permanent member of the Heart-effect team since 2022.



Víctor Muñoz I Calafell is a graduate in English and German Studies from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (1997) and in Directing and Playwriting from the Institut del Teatre (2006). From 2004 to 2009, he was assistant to the artistic team at Teatre Lliure, and since 2009, he has worked at Sala Beckett as artistic coordinator. He has directed several shows and has translated into Catalan plays by Alice Birch, Martin Crimp, Javier Daulte, Peter Morgan, Harold Pinter, Simon Stephens or Thornton Wilder.

Lars Ebert © private, Rolf Kemnitzer © private, Pavla Klouzalová © private, Patrik Lazić © private, Víctor Muñoz I Calafell © private



Théâtre Ouvert — Centre National des Dramaturgies Contemporaines' missions can be defined as promoting the renewal of contemporary dramatic art, provoking the emergence of new kinds of writing through exploration and experimentation, and supporting the development of these writings through the production, publication, and circulation of texts and theatrical forms such as readings, stagings, shows, and performances.



Bernhard Studlar was born in 1972 in Vienna, Austria. He studied Playwriting at the University of Arts in Berlin. For over 20 years, he has been working as a playwright and dramaturg. His plays have been translated into several languages including English, Italian, Czech, Polish and Turkish. In 2005, he founded the intercultural playwrights-project **WIENER WORTSTAETTEN**, which he is still leading as artistic director. The project encourages discussion and networking between authors.



Tamara Susoi graduated from theatre studies at the Theatre and Film University in Bucharest. Since 2003, she is an artistic consultant at the Odeon Theatre. Since 2012, she has been the coordinator of the **Fabulamundi** project at Odeon Theatre. From 1994 to the present, she has published articles and interviews in the magazines: *Scena*, *Teatrul azi*, *Canava*, *b-critic.ro*, *Critical Stages/Scènes critiques*. She coordinated the publication of two volumes of *Contemporary European Dramaturgy*.

Bernhard Studlar © Anna Zehetgruber, Tamara Susoi © Ana Maria Moldovan

Partner Institutions

European Theatre Convention (ETC), founded in 1988, is the largest network of public theatres in Europe. It is an arts organisation that promotes European theatre as a vital platform for dialogue, democracy and interaction that responds to, reflects and engages with today's diverse audiences and changing societies. ETC's current four-year programme of activities, **European Theatre: BREAK THE MOULD**, is co-funded by the European Union and supports networking, professional development and artistic collaborations for theatre staff across Europe — championing theatre as a key European art form for the 21st century. ETC has over 75 members from 33 countries and is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

www.europeantheatre.eu

PAV creates and realises cultural projects in partnership with artists and institutions. Born in Rome in 2000, PAV specialises in the production, management and administration of cultural events, festivals, shows and conferences and works with public national institutions, theatres, foreign embassies, artists and companies, combining an institutional profile with support to the independent scene. These different fields of action have always made for dialogue in a natural way: such interaction has proven to be a fundamental resort for many projects and generally for the entire working experience stemming from such connections. PAV's multifaceted activity allowed for the development of a privileged standpoint, with a 360° eye-view on contemporary theatre. www.pav-it.eu

Sala Beckett/Obrador Internacional de Dramatúrgia is a space for theatrical creation, training and experimentation which endeavours especially to promote contemporary drama and offer a meeting point for playwrights with other stage creators, artists from other disciplines and the general public. A range of activities take place in it, from teaching and experimentation programmes with varying degrees of specialisation, through regular show production and programming, to international courses, workshops and meetings; the publication and reading of drama; the writing of theoretical texts, and the translation and specific promotion of plays, authors and shows, with a special emphasis on new forms of dramatic writing. www.salabeckett.cat

Teatrul Odeon is a repertory theatre founded in 1946. It is a public institution subsidised by the General Council of Bucharest Municipality. The venue has two halls – Majestic Hall with a capacity of 270 seats and Studio Hall (reopened after 62 years in 2010) with a capacity of approximately 88 seats. Its permanent artistic team includes 35 actors, two directors, one designer and a choreographer. Its repertoire is varied, including performances based on Romanian and foreign texts, both classic and contemporary, highly appreciated at many festivals, both in the country and abroad. The theatre also develops alternative programmes: Dance at the Odeon, educational schemes (Theatre and School, Classic is fantastic – The Childhood of Great Composers), art exhibitions and international projects. www.teatrul-odeon.ro

Interkulturelle Theaterzentrum Berlin e.V. (ITZ) is acting mainly with young people (10-16) with multicultural and migration background in collaboration with schools (Kepler Schule, Adolf Reichwein Schule, Albert Einstein Gymnasium, Herman Nohl Schule, Loewenzahn Schule), multicultural associations such as TDZ (Türkisch-Deutsches-Zentrum e.V.), RoMa-Trial e.V., Vincentino Foundation, etc. The centre is part of a local network for cultural activities called Kulturnetzwerk Neukölln. Its main interest is to cross borders, generational borders, borders of language, discipline, genre, and social borders. It offers a wide range of activities: theatre workshops, dance workshops, but also productions of contemporary playwrights, readings, concerts, open mike sessions, common meals with discussions or construction workshops, public gardening, and cinema projections. At the heart of ITZ activities is the "Jugendtheaterwerkstatt Neukoelln" financed by the Bundesamt für Migration und Refugees, BAMF, which is acting in the "Hauser," our project room at the Esperantoplatz. www.itzberlin.de

Short Theatre is the multidisciplinary festival that, since 2006, in Rome, has rejigged the signs pointing to the changing landscape of national and international live entertainment, with a layered programme of shows, performances, installations, meetings, workshops, concerts and DJ sets. An open environment to research and exchange, one in which to develop new forms of transmission for theoretical and practical knowledge. In a complex metropolitan area like that of Rome, Short Theatre brings together the themes, content and subjectivity that define our present. Practice, theory, imagination and encounter are an organic part of a single artistic proposal, which dialogues with the spaces of the city to reactivate their meanings through reflection and curatorial practice, relaunching connections with the artis-

tic community. Short Theatre adopts tools and good practice in accordance with the objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda, for the reduction of its environmental impact and the promotion of inclusiveness, training, growth and innovation. www.shorttheatre.org

Divadlo Letí originated in September 2005. Its main artistic programme is the production, active support and development of contemporary drama. Contemporary plays are an essential part of live art that reflect the current needs of their viewers. Letí focuses on cooperation with young Czech playwrights, actors, directors, etc. – many of them considered to be significant talents of their generation. Letí currently produces stagings, provides artistic residencies for Czech and foreign playwrights, initiates stagings of contemporary plays, organises a showcase of stagings of contemporary plays from the Czech Republic and abroad, and it also deals with professional reflection and active work with the audience. In 2010, Divadlo Letí began working on a new project that was later entitled Centre for Contemporary Drama. The main goal of this Centre is to broadly support contemporary dramatic development in the Czech Republic and to present new Czech and foreign plays to the widest audiences. www.divadlo-leti.cz

Wiener Wortstaetten was founded in 2005 by playwright Bernhard Studlar and director Hans Escher as an intercultural playwriting project. Right from the start, the project focused on the creation of new texts for the stage, as well as dealing with socially important issues and networking between playwrights. Over the years, a variety of projects and productions of new plays have emerged. Initiatives such as the "exil-Dramatiker*innenpreis" became a springboard for young playwrights. From cross-border cooperations, most recently Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe, an international network was created that promotes both the exchange between playwrights and the translation of contemporary drama. Wiener Wortstaetten sees itself as an independent, creative research laboratory and text workshop, as a mediator between authors and the theatre business. And last but not least, as a place where new forms of authorship and "classical" playwriting meet each other at eye level. The goal of the project is the long-term promotion and support of playwrights. www.wortstaetten.at

La Mousson d'été, founded in 1995 and led by artistic director and stage director Véronique Bellegarde, is one of the major European events focused on the discovery, development and promotion of new playwriting. This seven-day exploration of contemporary theatre takes place in an 18th-century

abbey, Abbaye des Prémontrés, in Lorraine, Eastern France, where playwrights, directors, university teachers, students, and actors gather around a wide range of staged readings, conversations and performances. The goal is to give professionals and the general public access to new theatrical texts – either not yet produced, unpublished or newly translated into French. ‘
www.meec.org

Théâtre Ouvert – Centre National des Dramaturgies Contemporaines’ missions can be defined as promoting the renewal of contemporary dramatic art, provoking the emergence of new kinds of writing through exploration and experimentation, and supporting the development of these writings through the production, publication, and circulation of texts and theatrical forms such as readings, stagings, shows, and performances. www.theatre-ouvert.com

Culture Action Europe (CAE) is the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers. CAE is the first port of call for informed opinion and debate about arts and cultural policy in the EU. As the only intersectoral network, it brings together all practices in culture, from the performing arts to literature, the visual arts, design and cross-arts initiatives, to community centres and activist groups. CAE believes in the value and values of culture and its contribution to the development of sustainable and inclusive societies. www.cultureactioneurope.org

Heartefact (HF), through creative, expert, and artistic exchange in the region of the Western Balkans, supports and encourages contemporary and engaged cultural and artistic creativity, and thus creates the conditions for producing a new generation of progressive individuals. Ever since its establishment in 2009, Heartefact has been committed to creating a cultural space which is responsible towards the past (the *Memory* programme) and builds a secure future (the *Futurue* programme). Heartefact is dedicated to fostering a creative, critical and responsible rethinking of emerging artistic, social and political issues and phenomena at national, regional and European levels. HF is advocating new models of production, regional cooperation and alternative forms of education. Through the fusion of performing arts, creative industries and digital technologies, Heartefact, as a leading institution, develops policies and practices that support a responsible culture of remembrance, democratic values, and above all, respect for human rights, freedom of speech and accountability in the public sphere.
www.heartefact.org

University of Arts Târgu Mureş is a state-subsidised intercultural higher education institution, operating in the field of artistic creation and scientific research. It comprises the Faculty of Arts in Romanian and the Faculty of Arts in Hungarian, and it also manages the Studio Theatre, which is both a teaching laboratory and a production space for students and tutors. The University of Arts Târgu Mureş runs BA courses in acting, directing, theatre studies, choreography, set design, music pedagogy and multimedia, and MA courses in the same fields, as well as an MA in Playwriting – a creative writing two-year course. Many alumni of this course have become established playwrights, of national and international standing. www.uat.ro

SisterInArt Foundation, funded by Ita Krajewska and Kamila Straszynska, promotes intercultural dialogue through artistic and educational events, conferences, workshops, reviews, exhibitions, residence programmes, masterclasses, podcasts, social campaigns, competitions and festivals. The Foundation supports the popularisation of Polish culture abroad and disseminating foreign culture in Poland and the implementation of educational projects in the field of art, culture and psychology; the support of refugee, minority and excluded groups; the support of social solidarity connecting states, nations and ethnic groups and dialogue promotion of artistic and scientific initiatives in the field of European cultural heritage and the field of social psychology. www.instagram.com/sisterinart

About ETC

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ETC has more than 75 members from 33 countries and is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

www.europeantheatre.eu

Fabulamundi New Voices

Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe has been collaborating with European artists, professionals, and institutions for over 10 years, supporting the careers of playwrights and promoting a diverse, inclusive, gender-balanced, and sustainable creative ecosystem.

Following two small-scale and one large-scale editions funded by the European Commission, Fabulamundi New Voices marks a new chapter in a successful history of cultural promotion rooted in European values and heritage. This new phase aims to bring contemporary playwriting closer to younger generations.

With a network spanning 10 countries and 14 organisations active in the fields of theatre and dramaturgy — including partners from across all European regions and the Western Balkans — New Voices is developing an innovative methodology to support and train a new generation of playwrights, placing dramaturgy into the spotlight, removing the barriers to the profession, and integrating digital tools and outputs into the creation process.

www.fabulamundi.eu



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Co-funded by
the European Union

Fabulamundi New Voices is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Imprint

Climate-neutrally printed.

Published by the European Theatre Convention.

Executive Director: Heidi Wiley.

Coordinated and edited by Özgül Demiralp

Design and layout by Viktor Nübel, lieberungewoehnlich.de.



Druckprodukt mit finanziellem

Klimabeitrag

ClimatePartner.com/11669-2509-1002

How can we nurture the next generation of playwrights in a rapidly changing Europe? How do we open up theatre to new voices and ensure contemporary dramaturgy reflects the diversity of today's societies?

Fabulamundi New Voices: Diversifying Theatre – A Casebook captures reflections and models from a bold European project that placed emerging voices and inclusive creation at its core. It explores these questions through the lens of transnational collaboration among 13 cultural partner organisations, with a shared focus on youth, diversity, and innovation in playwriting.

Edited and published by the European Theatre Convention (ETC), this casebook is a resource for theatre professionals, educators, cultural policymakers, and anyone interested in reshaping the future of contemporary drama. It is both a record and a roadmap, charting how diversifying the theatre sector can open up new spaces for dialogue, imagination, and social change. It is part of ETC's casebook series of new practices in European Theatre.