

# THE TIMES

*of  
Drama*

# THE TIMES

ARTS FOR ALL

## Foreword



Since its inception, theatre has been a living expression of democracy. As society faces increasing polarisation, and artistic freedom comes under threat, theatre reminds us of the

importance of defending our beliefs. It opens our eyes to new perspectives, and starts conversations. Theatre plays a vital civic role, bringing people from different walks of life together, to share stories and engage in collective reflection. It invites us to listen, to question, to imagine – and to act.

This edition of the journal gives a recap of all that has been achieved by the European Theatre Convention, and sets out the exciting agenda for next year.

In 2025, against the backdrop of technological and societal change, the European Theatre Convention, supported by Creative Europe, provides an important space for conversation about the big questions facing the theatre sector and society at large. In April, it held its International Theatre Conference in Athens, where leaders and artists considered how theatre can safeguard democratic values and combat disinformation, and how it can engage younger, more diverse, audiences.

In May, I had the privilege of visiting the historic Deutsches Theater in Berlin, where I met the European Theatre Convention's leadership and practitioners. I heard about their priority – promoting and protecting public theatres as pillars of democracy. This commitment is alive through Break the Mould – ETC's project running from 2024 to 2028, co-funded by Creative Europe.

Seeing their work in action reinforced my conviction that artistic freedom is indispensable for a healthy society and must be defended. This is at the core of the European Theatre Convention's work. This year, in response to growing political pressure on cultural institutions, it launched the RESISTANCE NOW TOGETHER campaign, a cross-border initiative uniting artists in defence of creative autonomy.

Beyond culture and democracy, the European Theatre Convention has made significant progress in sustainability and innovation. In 2025, its Theatre Green Book initiative, backed by the European Commission, empowered dozens of theatres to pursue net-zero emissions by 2030. A self-certification system is now guiding institutions on operations, production, and energy management, aligning the theatre sector with the goals of the European Green Deal.

Meanwhile, its Digital Theatre Programme and Culture Testbeds for Performing Arts and New Technology (ACuTe) project embraced technological change and reimagined audience engagement. Fourteen theatres, universities and creative labs across 10 countries came together to pioneer virtual reality, creative coding, and audience co-creation in theatre.

Coming up, the Convention will hold conferences in Riga, where the network will join forces with the Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift (STAGES) project; and in Gothenburg, where it will partner with the newly launched Prospero New European Wave platform. Co-funded by Creative Europe and involving 19 institutions, the platform connects artists, festivals, and audiences across Europe through touring and streaming, giving emerging talent pan-European visibility.

From supporting democratic engagement to harnessing digital innovation, encouraging environmental action, and promoting the mobility of young and emerging artists, ETC's work in 2025 has reaffirmed a clear truth: theatre matters – both as an art form and as an essential part of Europe's democratic and cultural fabric. We will continue working together on this shared vision.

I wish you every success for the 2025/2026 season.

**Glenn Micallef**  
*European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport*



Celebratory Season: 50th Anniversary festivities at JK Opole Theatre  
© Michał Grocholski

## The Times of Drama



We live in *The Times of Drama*—times of disruption and transformation, when political acts unfold with theatrical force and truth itself is often performed rather than debated.

Yet, rather than retreating from this reality, theatre asserts its place at the centre of public life. It remains a space where societies can observe themselves, learn from their own performances, and rediscover the values that hold us together.

This year's ETC Journal takes its title from that conviction. *The Times of Drama* is not a lament, but an affirmation: of theatre's relevance, of its civic responsibility, and of its enduring ability to connect, question, and inspire.

This same spirit will guide our **ETC International Theatre Conference in Riga** in November 2025, hosted by Dailes Theatre, only a few hundred kilometres from the Russian border. Under the theme *Stage for Truth. Which Truth?*, artists and cultural leaders will gather to reflect on the meaning of truth in an age of competing narratives. The internationally renowned sociologist Richard Sennett will open the conference with a keynote on our times as an era of performativity—a concept that resonates deeply with theatre's insight into how power, empathy, and identity are enacted in society.

Across Europe, ETC continues to embody these values through action. In close dialogue with the **European Commission**, our network advances projects that **diversify our sector**, **link theatre with health and wellbeing**, foster **new dramatic texts**, and strengthen opportunities for the **next generation of artists**. We thank Commissioner Micallef for providing an inspiring foreword to this Journal, and look forward to continued collaboration during the implementation of the upcoming Culture Compass.

This edition of the Journal features excerpts of plays selected from two rising playwrights, and a special interview with leading artistic voices about why they consider theatre important. Among them is **Mario Banushi**, whose work within

the *Prospero New – European platform for theatre* stands as a model of how European talent can flourish on international stages.

Sustainability, too, has entered a decisive new phase. Following the **STAGES Forum** in Riga, the first **ETC Theatre Green Book self-certifications** are being awarded this season—marking a significant step toward climate-neutral theatres as set out in ETC's Sustainable Action Code. Meanwhile, our **Resistance Now Together** campaign has mobilised artists across Europe to defend artistic freedom as a cornerstone of democracy. What began as a creative movement is now advancing as concrete cultural policy, with the call for a **European Artistic Freedom Act** gaining visibility at institutional level.

Through our flagship EU-funded programme **Break the Mould**, we continue to foster innovation and exchange—supporting new collaborations in **digital transformation** and **sustainable theatre practice with development grants**. And the fifth edition of our award-winning **Young Europe** programme unites nine playwrights across six countries to craft a new *dramaturgy of care* for young audiences, writing plays to be performed in classrooms—spaces where the future of Europe is already being imagined.

The design of this journal reflects our vision: intertwined forms for encounter, vivid colours for diversity. It visualises the essence of ETC's work—representing theatre as an open, dynamic field of exchange.

In *The Times of Drama*, theatre stands not at the margins, but at the heart of Europe's democratic and cultural life. It is our common stage, our shared rehearsal for empathy, truth, and the courage to imagine a better future.

**Heidi Wiley**  
Executive Director,  
*European Theatre Convention (ETC)*



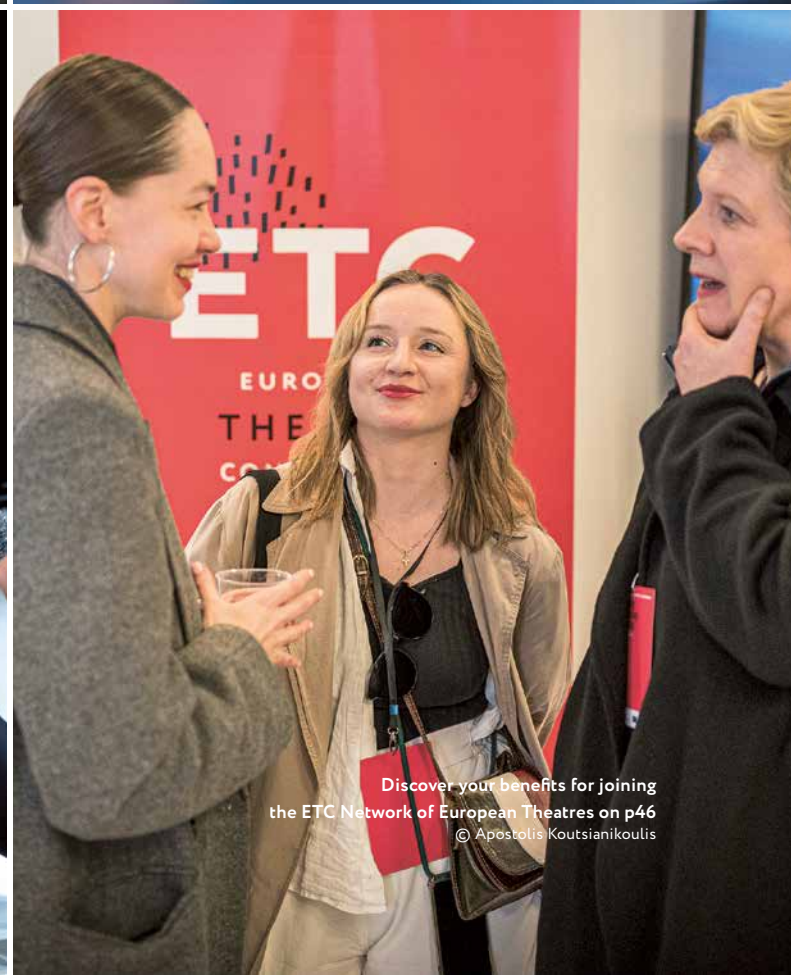
What if one of the most powerful tools for supporting mental health is something as ancient and accessible as theatre?  
Pr. Dr. Shuyan Liu shares her thoughts on p.10  
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What opportunities are there for ETC Members to make digital and sustainable theatre?  
Discover the ETC Season 2025/26 from p.26  
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Artists Clément and Guillaume Papachristou, winners of the Fast Forward Jury Award 2024, explain why they make theatre on p.19  
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Discover your benefits for joining the ETC Network of European Theatres on p.46  
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# What is European Theatre Today?

Key trends for the 2025-26 season,  
identified by the ETC Board of Directors

Photo Cláudia Belchior © Filipe Ferreira, Norbert Rakowski © Edgar de Poray, Iris Laufenberg © Julia Baier

*European theatre today stands as a resilient and vital force, nurturing creativity, dialogue, and solidarity even in the face of uncertainty. More than ever, it affirms its power to inspire hope, defend freedom, and imagine new possibilities for our shared future. It reminds us that art not only reflects society but also has the strength to transform it.*



**Cláudia Belchior**

*ETC President & Executive General Coordinator  
at Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon/Portugal*

*European theatre today mirrors*

a continent in transition - restless, questioning, full of doubts and longings. The stage has become less a place of answers than of courageous questioning. We are witnessing artists turning their attention not only to political realities or social urgencies, but also to the fragile, intimate space of human identity. Who are we, when so much of life is a performance? In a society where identities can be curated, convictions simulated, and emotions staged, the theatre exposes both the masks we wear and the cost of wearing them. Audiences across Europe are invited to recognise themselves in characters who struggle with authenticity, responsibility, freedom and belonging. This theatre season on the continent will draw attention to the everyday European - their anxieties, comforts, contradictions, moments of solitude, and the longing for connection. Rather

*Last season, Berlin's cultural sector,*

including the Deutsches Theater, experienced severe and sudden budget cuts – the first in a series of similar decisions by local and national public authorities throughout Europe in the following weeks and months.

The first effects of these cuts in Berlin are becoming apparent: a much more fragile independent scene and the disappearance of projects and partners throughout the city, particularly in the fields of sustainability, inclusion and cultural outreach. The global political climate adds to the uncertainty and fears.

However, I believe that it is precisely in such moments that theatre can work its magic. Theatre provides a space in which to confront our fears and, in the best cases, transform them into our unique form of gold: emotions, shared experiences and solidarity. Our objective for 2025/2026!

**Iris Laufenberg**

*ETC Vice President & Artistic Director at  
Deutsches Theater, Berlin/Germany*



than offering definitive statements or answers, theatre will invite audiences to engage with nuanced portraits, emotional encounters, and sometimes ironic reflections. It is in these shared moments on stage and in dialogue with the audience that fragile truths can emerge, prompting us to reflect on our own experiences, roles, and relationships. If there is one common trend, it is this: theatre is reclaiming its role as a mirror of truth, however fractured, however uncomfortable. It reminds us that we are both actors and witnesses in the ongoing world events - and that the act of gathering in a theatre still holds the potential to strip away illusions, and to bring us closer to what it means to be human, here and now.

**Norbert Rakowski**

*ETC Vice President & General Manager and Artistic Director  
of JK Opole Theatre, Opole/Poland*



## EUROPEAN THEATRE TODAY

*For me, theatre today is* a unique gathering that, in a polarized world hungry for immediate answers, brings us into the same place at the same time for a shared duration—an intentional pause that champions deep listening. In that sacred interval between the house lights dimming and the first words, we open ourselves to voices beyond our own, resisting the instinct to reply before we've truly heard. We saw this collective act of listening come alive with the immense success of Barber Shop Chronicles by Inua Ellams at Théâtre de Liège, where shared stories bridged borders and affirmed our capacity for empathy and solidarity.



### Serge Rangoni

*ETC Treasurer & General Manager & Artistic Director of Théâtre de Liège/Belgium*

*Whilst preparing our upcoming season,* it suddenly struck me that a large number of productions were by artists or companies we have been supporting for a very long time. I also realised that investing in long-term support for artists and building meaningful relationships between generations, disciplines, and audiences had become an integral part of our identity. Forging international alliances, taking risks, providing time and space for artists to develop their work, to experiment and share experiences, is more important than ever when pressure on the cultural sector is growing and funding ever more difficult to find. As freedom of artistic expression is increasingly compromised and political priorities are shifting, artists and institutions rely ever more on authentic dialogue and true co-creation. European theatre is dynamic, diverse and vibrant but it needs a strong signal that we are prepared to work across borders and break down barriers to keep telling the urgent stories we need to hear.



### Tom Leick-Burns

*ETC Secretary & Artistic Director and General Manager, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg/Luxembourg*

*We are witnessing artists turning their attention not only to political realities or social urgencies, but also to the fragile, intimate space of human identity*

**NORBERT RAKOWSKI**

## The European theatre landscape today

faces a delicate balance between artistic freedom and political, social and economic pressures. In some contexts, public funding indirectly influences programming, while in others, more overt forms of censorship are evident. However, these challenges also present opportunities: many artists respond with creativity, experimenting with new languages and hybrid forms that blend tradition and innovation. Social, environmental and identity themes are becoming central in contemporary productions. Transnational collaborations and cultural exchanges between companies strengthen a shared European sense while respecting local identities. Digital technologies, while raising questions about the live experience, broaden access and inclusivity. Theatre, in this context, remains an essential space for dialogue, critique and imagination. Defending artistic freedom means ensuring a theatre capable of questioning the present and building alternative visions for the future. We have the responsibility to protect spaces of creative autonomy and to foster constructive dialogue among cultures, institutions and artists.

### Barbara Ferrato

*ETC Board & Head of Artistic, Planning and Development Department at Fondazione del Teatro Stabile di Torino – Teatro Nazionale/Italy*



Photo Serge Rangoni © M.-F. Plissant, Tom Leick-Burns © Bohumil Kostohryz, Barbara Ferrato © Teatro Stabile Torino

*In a world shaped by polycrises,* war, and disconnection, we must ask what kinds of stories we want to keep telling. If narrative has the power to shape reality, shouldn't our attention shift from endless conflict to radical care? Care dramaturgy offers precisely that shift: not as a soft alternative, but as a rigorous reimagining of what it means to make theatre. In Young Europe V, we will explore this idea where it matters most — the classroom, where the future is already in rehearsal. But is this shift even possible? Won't our well-made plays collapse if we remove conflict as the load-bearing wall? Are we able to adjust to new structures after centuries of the same plot? It might not be easy. But care dramaturgy doesn't promise ease — it invites us to imagine otherwise. To rebuild, not with dominance or drama, but with attention, reciprocity, and the fragile courage to begin again.

## We live at a time

when the world seems as if it is struggling to destroy itself, with sociopolitical and military explosions, poverty and wrong division of wealth, green worries, all over the planet, eliminating hope for tomorrow.

Theatre comes in as a ray of hope. Despite its financial struggles, with substantial cuts even at the European level, theatre still fights to preserve its vital role in leading societies to take a good look at themselves and attempt change. A new world of technological opportunities is at our disposal, and digitality opens immense roads to endless possibilities. Theatre asks questions, seeks the truth, fights for people's rights, artistic freedom and reaffirms its role by confronting questions of diversity and inclusion, rediscovering under-represented voices, crying for peace. It glows with its live and passionate relationship with an audience constantly bound to screens and lifeless interactions.



### Marina Maleni

*ETC Board & Theatre Development Officer, Cyprus Theatre Organisation (THOC)/Cyprus*

Photo Paulien Geerlings © Sanne Peper, Irene Moundraki © Elina Giouantli, Marina Maleni © Private



### Paulien Geerlings

*ETC Board & Head Dramaturge at De Toneelmakerij, Amsterdam/The Netherlands*

## Today, theatre must return

to its primordial roots — perhaps more urgently than ever before. We live in an era of unprecedented technological advancement, yet people are becoming increasingly isolated. The more connected we are online, the more disconnected we become in real life. This paradox deepens the existential void, intensifying the need for answers to life's most fundamental questions. Theatre, with its social, philosophical, and healing dimensions, offers crucial support in times of crisis — to individuals and societies alike. It is a space where we can confront the truth, imagine alternatives, and experience collective catharsis. Yet in Europe, theatre faces significant challenges: maintaining its independence, resisting political interference, and preserving its capacity to speak freely and authentically. Theatre is not merely entertainment. It is a vital tool — even a weapon — for awakening consciousness. It urges us to engage with life more fully, with awareness, courage, and responsibility. Amid cultural fragmentation and socio-political upheaval, Europe needs these connections. Theatre is a unifying art — a bridge between cultures, a fertile ground for dialogue, encounter, comparison, and coexistence. This is the ontological resistance that theatre must embody — and the profound challenge it faces in Europe today.

### Irene Moundraki

*ETC Board & Head Dramaturg, Head of Archive, Library and International Collaborations Department, National Theatre of Greece/Greece*





ETC Conference at National Theatre Greece, 2025 © Apostolis Koutsianikoulis

## Theatre and Mental Health: A Hidden Path to Well-Being

*Interview with Shuyan Liu*



**What do other experts from other sectors - namely academia and science - think about the role of theatre in 2025? Here Pr. Dr. Shuyan Liu, Junior Professor of Global Mental Health at Charité - Universitätsmedizin in Berlin, & Brain City Ambassador for the city, offers her perspective on the the vital importance of theatre for personal and community wellbeing.**

### Beyond the Stage: Theatre as Participatory Healing

In the global conversation about mental health, solutions are often framed in medical or clinical terms – therapy sessions,

psychiatric care, or pharmaceutical interventions. But what if one of the most powerful tools for supporting mental health is something as ancient and accessible as theatre?

At the heart of Dr. Shuyan Liu's insight is the idea that theatre's true power lies not just in performance, but in participation. "It's not just reaching a number of audience members," she says. "Theatre can be a platform to include people who are otherwise excluded from society."

This inclusion is not metaphorical. Shuyan draws attention to how theatre can reach individuals who may be cut off from formal medical services – refugees without health insurance, children with disabilities, or communities where stigma

prevents access to psychiatric care. "Theatre can serve as a bridge," she explains, "connecting people through shared stories, collective creation, and emotional expression."

Indeed, her own brief experience with drama courses at the Technical University of Berlin opened her eyes to the therapeutic depth of performance. "It was very challenging," she recalls. "You have to expose emotion, improvise with others, move your body, confront your struggles. It's cognitive, emotional, and social all at once."

These layers mirror the core components of mental health: emotional regulation, social integration, and cognitive functioning. Theatre, in this light, becomes more than culture—it becomes an informal yet impactful mode of therapy.

### A Scientific Lens on Artistic Practice

Shuyan isn't alone in identifying the health benefits of cultural participation. As she points out, research has shown the power of creative practices like dance and drumming to reduce symptoms of depression, enhance executive function, and increase social belonging.

She cites the example of a randomised trial in South Africa, where drumming therapy significantly improved mood and cognitive function in adolescents living with HIV. "Most importantly, it reduced stigma," she notes—an especially important outcome in settings where mental illness is often misunderstood or heavily stigmatised.

Though Shuyan has not yet published data specifically on theatre, she is currently collaborating with the European Theatre Convention (ETC) on a proposal for a Horizon Europe research project that would explore theatre's impact on children with disabilities. Inspired by Australia's AllPlay programme – which successfully uses dance and sport to engage neurodivergent children— Shuyan envisions adapting this model to the theatre context, as a form of "social prescribing." In this approach, cultural activities are recommended alongside or in place of medical interventions, particularly for underserved populations.

### Cultural Contexts and the Language of Mental Health

One of the driving forces behind Shuyan's work is a sensitivity to cultural differences in how mental health is experienced and expressed. In China, for instance, she notes that depression is often reported in somatic terms – patients may complain

of fatigue or lack of strength, rather than sadness. In Germany, the emphasis is more often on mood, while in African contexts, sadness is typically expressed more directly.

These cultural nuances highlight why a one-size-fits-all model of mental health care is insufficient, and why culturally embedded practices like theatre can be so effective. "When people move from villages to cities, family structures change. They may be surrounded by others and still feel deeply lonely," she explains. "Theatre provides a way to reconnect—to share space, story, and emotion."

In this way, theatre serves as a modern echo of ancient oral traditions, restoring a sense of shared humanity. It doesn't matter if you're a trained actor or a newcomer: the value lies in the act of gathering, expressing, and being seen.

### Theatre, Culture, and the Science of Belonging

While the mental health field has traditionally leaned on psychology and medicine, Shuyan is part of a growing cohort of researchers advocating for a more interdisciplinary approach—one that includes culture, creativity, and connection as core components of care.

"Theatre requires us to be present. You learn to be spontaneous, to improvise, to empathise," she says. "It's about memory, movement, social cues. All of these are vital to our mental functioning."

In this way, theatre functions like a laboratory for the mind: a safe space where individuals can experiment with identity, process emotion, and build community—all of which are known protective factors for mental health.

### What Next?

Shuyan's upcoming work with ETC and other international collaborators aims to produce the kind of data policymakers often demand. But for now, her message is clear: theatre and the arts are not a luxury, but a necessity. They offer not only access to beauty and expression, but to healing, belonging, and mental well-being.

As she reminds us, the World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being." Theatre, in its fullest form, touches all three.

## OUR STORIES OF CHANGE



From 'Don Chisciotte ad ardere' © Marco Caselli Nirmal

## Theatre and Sustainability: Poetic Initiatives and Consistent Progress

*An interview with Francesca Venturi,  
producer at Ravenna Teatro - Centro di Produzione,  
by Marie Le Sourd, General Secretary of On The Move,  
as part of ETC's Our Stories of Change programme.*

**The European Theatre Convention (ETC) has pledged to drive its network of over 75 theatres towards net-zero emissions across their productions, buildings and operations by 2030. But in 2025 and a polycrisis context, how easy is it for European Theatres to pursue sustainability and implement these tools?**

Based on the use of these tools and in view of the first year of self-certification that will happen during the ETC Conference in Riga in November 2025, we had a conversation with Francesca Venturi, producer at Ravenna Teatro - Centro di Produzi-

one. Here are the main points of learning that can be shared to complement a more data based approach of change through the above mentioned self-certification.

### **A team involvement - the people**

The process has been positive from the outset. 'We started using the Green Book in October 2024 when we established our Green Team. We immediately noticed that the Operations and Building teams were very enthusiastic, so we implemented the main stages in those sectors first.

There were lots of ideas, but we didn't know exactly how to realise them. The webinars and tools provided by ETC and Renew Culture helped us to understand what we could practically change and provided us with inspiration. Now, many people have ideas on how to improve our green level in the operations sector. It's incredible to see the involvement of colleagues who were initially sceptical or uninterested in this project.'

As far as the Green Team is concerned - which currently comprises two senior officials, two communication and two production team members - 'there are different levels to consider between senior leaders and decision makers, as well as people responsible for different areas, such as technicians (in charge of buildings and production), managers, and people connected to the audience, such as front office staff, as well as producers and tour organisers. The challenge lay less in involving people than in the fact that the tools and training sessions are in English. There was a need to empower people, particularly the younger generation in theatre, to take part in the online training in English. They have more knowledge of English, but they are less accustomed to using it on a daily basis. (...)

Beyond the webinars and visits from the Renew Culture team, we also meet every month to discuss how we can further green our practices. The process may seem slower because, unlike some other theatres, we do not have a dedicated 'green representative' and lack the capacity to do so. Questions related to this issue are dealt with alongside other points, but there is a certain regularity to it. At the same time, this encourages others to suggest ways to improve our work process. The issue is always at the forefront of people's minds.'

**Acknowledge where we start** and the need to go beyond this 'Being part of a theatre centre founded by a company that considers ecology to be one of its core values helps with this process. The people who work with us - artists, employees, and technicians - don't really 'waste'; we treat the spaces where we work and what we do as our own, so we care for them with attention and respect.

As a small theatre company with 30 permanent employees, we find things are easier'. (...)

'At the start of the process, the technicians were maybe the most reluctant to change, perhaps because they feared that their work would change too much. For example, they were concerned about the materials used in production, given that at least 60% of these materials are always already recycled (curtains, costumes, props, etc.), which the theatre has held in

its large warehouse since the early '80s, or which are borrowed from other companies. Having a basis of ecological engagement is good, but it is not sufficient, nor should it be used as an excuse to do less, particularly from a technician's perspective. We are already doing well, but we should try to use less PVC and steel on our stages. Steel is also very heavy, which makes touring our pieces difficult. Thanks to the Theatre Green Book's tracker, we realised that we are quite good in terms of production, but not so much when it comes to touring, since we don't have electric vans and there are still few charging points in Italy. We always bring lighting and sound equipment on tours as venues often do not have good equipment on stage. (...) We should work on networking with other theatres in order to change the touring system. Italian theatres extensively network for artistic planning, particularly to support young artists, protect the rights of entertainment workers and secure funding. The new challenge will be collaborating to move towards sustainable touring.'

### **Focus on some areas of change – communication and governance**

'The first major change was in our communication with and relationship to our audience. When presenting the season's programme, for example, we changed from a 40-page colour booklet to a flyer with QR codes. Throughout the past season, the communication team worked to provide information to the public while minimising the use of printed paper. We are committed to minimising our paper usage and using FSC-certified paper. All of this year's theatre season materials will feature an eco-friendly visual identity with images of trees.

Even in the area of governance, our policy is to invest in the theatre's energy efficiency annually, using the economic resources of our private cooperative. The venue is not owned by us, but remains the property of the city.

Furthermore, we tried to improve on what was already working. We asked our employees to cycle to work as much as possible, avoid wasting paper, sort waste and turn off lights and heating when leaving a room. In general, developing these processes may feel like an additional workload, but we feel that it is the right thing to do'.

### **On the need to adapt and not exclude**

'As far as communication and the online process is concerned, some audience members, particularly the older generation, found it difficult to accept the change, for instance the use of QR codes. They were angry with us. The communication team took



Clockwise from top-left: Francesca Venturi (third from left) discusses sustainability and the ETC Theatre Green Book at the ETC International Theatre Conference in Nova Gorica in 2024 © David Verlič

Warehouse picture from Ravenna Teatro & designs used to promote the 2025-26 season at Teatro Ravenna; warehouse picture © Ravenna Teatro

the time to explain during our season presentations. Our team gave different presentations and explained what each performance was about. This took more time, but it was appreciated.

For each performance, we create a small programme containing basic information. It is not a booklet, and we display the presentation in the venue. This is also because these programmes are sometimes left on the floor. We encourage visitors to return them to the entrance'. (...)

'We collaborate with an association for some performances, where they provide sign language interpretation. For blind people, there is the possibility to have headsets for one night out of four. We are in contact with associations connected to them'.

### A challenging work context – the building

From the description of the theatre and the production centre, we immediately see the challenge of the building in relation to the cultural heritage it represents: 'We are constantly working to make the space ecologically sustainable, investing a portion of the funding we receive each year to improve the theater's energy efficiency.'

'By 2030, all the buildings will have switched to LED lights (we already bought LED projectors for the main hall during the last production). Although many improvements have been made to the heating and cooling systems, switching to an all-electric system instead of gas, the main entrance door is very old and does not insulate at all, so it needs to be replaced.'



### Ravenna Teatro

is a centre for theatrical creation, established in 1991 as an emanation of the poetics of its founding artists, Marco Martinelli and Ermanna Montanari. The centre runs its programmes across three spaces that it manages directly: the Teatro Rasi (a former church dating to the 14th century), the 18th-century Palazzo Malagola, and the Vulkan workshop-studio. It also operates at the Teatro Alighieri and other venues, engaging in an innovative approach to theatrical "cultivation" within the city. Currently, the ETC TGB only concerns the Rasi Theatre.

## A multiple level of investment – the different stakeholders involved

### The relation with the audience

'Ravenna is a small city. People cycle, but there is no public transport after 9 pm. We encourage car sharing and organise a bus system to connect Ravenna with the surrounding villages, collecting people and bringing them back. Otherwise, people would have to drive, which would cause parking issues as well as pollution. People from nearby towns are often reluctant to come to the theatre in the city centre, but if there is a bus and someone on the bus provides information about the show they are going to watch, they might be more inclined to come. These services are included in their subscription tickets, which is very much appreciated. This system existed before the Theatre Green Book process, but it has given us more motivation to continue, even if it requires some internal organisation (e.g. team members having to be on the bus)'.

### The city council of Ravenna and the cooperation with peer-organisations

'We have a city council that is very engaged and encourages green practices. In 2024, the council offered organisations whose employees cycle to work the opportunity to provide a refund based on the number of kilometres cycled. We applied for this support and will receive an answer in September. Each employee will then have an app on their phone to measure the distance travelled. (...) Together with our 'neighbors' - the city's Art Museum, the Music Conservatory (also owned by the municipality), and the headquarters of the Association of Cooperatives - we are as well working to build a green energy community. This community-based project manages local energy resources (e.g. solar panels) and bridges the gap between production and consumption. It engages residents, cultural activities, and local businesses to increase the generation and self-consumption of renewable energy'.

### The Italian connection and dissemination

'Another Theatre Green Book was presented in Milan. Another ETC member in Italy (Teatro Stabile di Torino) is involved in the process.

When we sign contracts with companies, we include a clause stating our commitment to environmental sustainability and our



Image used for Teatro Ravenna's summer season ticket campaign.  
© Photo: Guido Guidi, Graphics: Studio Luca Sarti

intention to implement basic rules in this regard. This information will circulate among the companies. For now, we are simply communicating with the companies and gathering their feedback as a first step in the process'.

The question of networking and sharing of knowledge are also key in this process: 'Some companies and theatres are already committed to sustainability. We need to network to raise awareness of this and achieve results more quickly', including on touring as abovementioned.

### The network – The role of the European Theatre Convention

'ETC opened our eyes to a journey that we were already on, but without truly realising its scope and importance at a European level. The mentoring and advice we received were crucial in helping us to understand how to structure the team, our communications and activities. They gave us practical tools with which to measure actual results, and they allowed us to connect with other European theatres, which is crucial for exchanging ideas and improving together. Seeing other people's successes is encouraging – if they can do it, we can do it too!'

In ETC conferences, there are specific meetings on the subject. We gradually became part of the process. First, we heard about the Theatre Green Book in Timișoara, and then we immediately thought it was a very interesting programme. After that, we were able to apply for it. This is always a recurring theme, which allows us to take a moment with all ETC members to share practices, tips, etc. We plan to be more engaged, but we need time to read, watch and digest all the experiences.'

### The changes to happen (in a different way)

'People often think that achieving climate neutrality by 2030 is unattainable, so they hesitate to start their green journey. They are unaware that they are already taking many actions that have a positive environmental impact. We recommend undertaking this process to receive concrete support from experts in theatre and the environment, and to connect with theatre professionals from different sectors. Multi-level discussion helps us to understand where we can go'.

'Thanks to ETC-TGB, we understood that we can't change everything right away - in fact, some things may never change - but we can make small improvements, and that our mental attitude is the most important thing. We should embrace change and do everything we can, but not fight pointlessly against what can't be changed'.

'In practice, our next goal beyond focusing on the building is to reduce the environmental impact of our tours by using fewer heavy or polluting materials, until we can count on electric vans'.

'We believe that cultural spaces can play a significant role in raising public awareness of sustainability issues.

This is why we will continue to devise poetic initiatives related to climate change and our ability to influence it'.



**Francesca Venturi** has been working with Ravenna Teatro since 1998, as production and tour manager for the Teatro delle Albe company. Since the beginning she has made a fundamental contribution to the development of Ravenna

Teatro's international collaborations, both by participating in several networks and by taking the Albe shows to festivals and theatres in Europe and around the world.



**Marie Le Sourd** has been Secretary General of On the Move, the international information network for cultural mobility, since 2012. With over 25 years of experience in international cultural cooperation, Marie has built a career

devoted to enhancing the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, advocating for fairer conditions, and ensuring access to knowledge and funding across borders.

## Why do you make theatre?

### Five rising stars reflect on why theatre is so important for them - and for audiences - in the current time.

**Mario Banushi's** first work as a stage director was the performance 'Ragada', which was created and presented in a house in Athens. His next work, 'Goodbye, Lindita', premiered in 2023 at the experimental stage of the National Theatre of Greece, and quickly accumulated rave reviews and international invitations from esteemed festivals and theatres. His play 'MAMI', part of the Propsero NEW European Wave project, was a breakout star at the 2025 Festival d'Avignon.

**Guillaume and Clément Papachristou**, b. 1988, are twins. Guillaume has lived with the consequences of cerebral palsy, an injury to the brain, since his birth. He is an artist, and a member of various inclusive dance and theatre companies in Marseille. Clément is an actor, director and dramaturge. Their play 'UNE TENTATIVE PRESQUE COMME UNE AUTRE' was the winner of both the Jury and Young Jury Awards at the Fast Forward Festival at ETC Member Staatsschauspiel Dresden.

**Data Tavadze** is Director of Royal District Theatre in Tbilisi / Georgia. The theatre's production 'LIBERTÉ' has been under consistent attack from Government-controlled media outlets and factions within the Georgian Church.

**Svenja Viola Bunjarten's** work is the recipient of the Berlin Opera Prize for her libretto '#POST NUCLEAR LOVE'; the 2021 Heidelberg Play Market Author Award for her feminist horror play 'MARIA MAGDA', and the 3rd Else-Lasker-Schüler Stückpreis for 'DIE ZUKÜNFTIGE'.

#### 1 Mario Banushi, Director and Choreographer (Greece/Albania)



I make art because I want to remember — and for others to remember too. Theatre for me is not simply a profession, it is breath; through images, sounds, and silences, I can show the way the beautiful and the terrifying coexist. Each time I create a work, I see more clearly my fears, the light in the room, and also the shadows.

I do theatre for memory, for roots, for the uncanny — and it is my way of keeping my cultural and emotional heritage alive. Because in this world, no words, religions, or "musts" are needed; it gives back to you what you have given it, treats you as you have treated it — and that is why it is magical.

#### 2 Svenja Viola Bunjarten, Playwright (Germany)



My writing is highly influenced by pop culture motives and feminist thought, it reflects on ways we tell stories and longs to explore genre and repurpose genre for socio-political thought. I seek to instrumentalise humour as a tool for dealing with despair, in an attempt to transform hopelessness. I'm

also concerned with the question of how I can contribute to politicisation through writing.

In my research, I consider raising awareness of the connection between antifeminism, transphobia, racism, capitalism, and right-wing ideology on social media to be essential in order to replace the sense of wonder about the current fascist turn with empowering knowledge. I'm also thinking more deeply about the limitations of theatre and what contribution I can make outside of my craft to build a robust antifascist resistance.

#### 3 Data Tavadze, Director (Georgia)



Theatre remains one of the last places where we can gather without armour, protected only by the unity of people. I believe theatre plays a vital role in today's political landscape because it creates a space where we don't feel alone or powerless. Every regime's

primary goal is to destroy the spaces where we practice solidarity — where we come together to fight the loneliness of the individual against an unjust system. Art is here to remind us: you are not alone.

Today, Georgian theatre has turned its stages into barricades and barricades into stages, standing as a shield for society and its audience. When asked, "When will you return to the stage?" I answer, "When our audience returns to the theatre." Today, our audience stands before the parliament in Tbilisi — today, many are unlawfully imprisoned. Artists march shoulder to shoulder with their audience; they are with them in prison cells.

In a world increasingly dominated by corrupted language, censorship, simulated realities, conspiracy theories, speed, noise, and violence, theatre stands as an ultimate refuge: slow, human, and courageous. We create theatre to explore what it truly means to be alive — to protect what feels most endangered: empathy, complexity, memory. In theatre, we rehearse what it means to care, to heal the fractures of polarisation, and to remind each other that even in the harshest realities, when everything tries to strip us of our humanity, we still have the power to choose to remain human.

I make theatre not because I have hope, but because it is how I fight for hope. And some nights — just some — it feels like we win a little ground back.

#### 4 Clément and Guillaume Papachristou, Artists (France)



Guillaume Papachristou: When I was a child, I was very interested in music and theatre, and everything artistic and lively. I think it was because I didn't speak, so I watched other people's behaviour, their gestures and body language a lot, and it made me laugh, and I

wanted to be a bit like them. I watched my brother Clément a lot, and that's how theatre began for me, through observation. Not speaking for many years, and also having limited mobility, shaped the way I look at others, and gave me an understanding and listening skills that I now seek on the theatre stage.

**Clément Papachristou:** For me too, theatre and dance are absolutely linked to my relationship with my brother Guillaume. I can't think of one without the other. I still remember those moments when we were children and I would perform for Guillaume, in front of Guillaume, who was always the best audience: always in a good mood and always in the same place, because back then we would put his chair somewhere and he could stay there for hours and hours. I think that's how it all started for me: I wanted to bring the outside world to him, imitate others, laugh at the outside world that we couldn't reach. That's how our bond was formed, through little plays, like pieces brought back from the outside world, which we brought here, to our stage, to our world.

**Guillaume Papachristou:** Yes, body language was our secret language, impervious to others, which always connected us and formed our unity.

It was this language that made us want to do theatre and share it with others.

## How are artists addressing these themes in their work?

Discover two excerpts from stunning new plays, selected by the ETC Drama Committee to be translated into English for the first time. The first is 'who run for happiness', by Jaka Smerkolj Simone, in partnership with Prešernovo Gledališče Kranj/Slovenia

a play for people who run and the world surrounding them

» The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. «

How can I care for another when I don't even know how to care for myself? All that this world offers me to take care of myself are expenses. But for fuck's sake, where is someone like me supposed to get so much money? This world is no longer made for people who were born into it but for those who inherited it, who already have everything and can just exist because living is no longer possible.

The water that flows out of me and the water that I take in. These two waters, this balance, because it is, in reality, just one single water. This is the care I invest in myself. I care so that I can remain. In this balance, there is a peace that cannot be found anywhere else. The water that flows out is the only certainty in life, the only thing that can flow out without hurting, the only thing that must flow out and keeps me alive. I dreamed that I was sweating blood, but it wasn't a nightmare. I just knew that my body was telling me it could no longer bear it. It had learned and shaped itself, but now it could no longer endure. It had started to flow out, and I knew that I had done everything I could, everything that was in my power. I will be a shell, an empty husk that will slowly collapse in on itself. A broken water cycle, permanently sealed by a fatal red stain, in the awareness that everything here is just as it must be, and that it is no longer possible to go forward.

I posted an ad on Facebook to find life.

In other people. I wanted to see how they live, so they would infect me with it. With life. Together we would listen to the rising heartbeat, and I would know, in this moment, I know, that we would not stop, that we are in this together, that life is not a straight line.

I wanted your ups and downs, and I wanted to belong to another person because it is so damn hard to belong to myself. What is that even supposed to mean? How can we even talk about some authentic and true version of ourselves these days?

I look at the ground, mud and dead leaves have gathered on my sneakers. On the soles, there are the remains of insect corpses, traces of dog poop, and a pebble embedded in the rubber treads. I think about washing my sneakers, just as I think about washing myself. I think about how even after scrubbing and soaping them, there will still be traces of this wear, of this exhaustion. The threads of fabric that can no longer be tied into knots, the dents and scratches in the plastic that can no longer be smoothed out. I

think that when I look in the mirror in the evening, I won't notice these traces. I will feel at peace with the sense that I have washed these traces off myself, and they have disappeared forever, leaving no lasting marks on my body or my life. I think that at that moment, I will probably glance out of the bathroom into the hallway, where the sneakers will be drying. And I will know that this is not the case. The sneakers are my limbs and are a reminder that this is not the case.

I no longer exist; I am merely a project in the eyes of others. Available for their ambitions and perversions.

I have realized that home cannot be a place, that home can only be people.

And because people do not exist, home can only be you. A single small and simple "you", mischievous and smiling, sometimes bored or grumpy, even curt. Home can only be a person who chooses you. But what if no one chooses me?

*They don't notice that the garbage bins have been burned, that the helicopter doesn't just hum but pounds relentlessly. They don't notice that the homeless man on the street has been dead for two days. They don't notice the little girl walking fearfully along the edges of buildings. They don't notice anything. There is nothing left, just the quiet sliding of molecules of plastic soles over molecules of concrete pavement. This is the symphony of the night. The surface over which runners run.*

Do you think the people who come after us will know what to do with all of this, with all this suffering?

Do you think there will come a time when they will be able to distinguish and explain what was important and what wasn't?

I am glad that I will not live to see it. I think I am



### About Jaka Smerkolj Simone

Jaka Smerkolj Simoneti is a playwright, dramaturg, theatre critic and theatre director based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He

is currently writing his doctoral thesis on the history of female theatre directors in Slovenia. As part of Young Europe IV: Unheard voices Jaka wrote the play Little Stars which was staged at SNT Nova Gorica directed by Živa Bizovičar.

ready to say goodbye to this world. I think I have been ready for a long time.

» Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that. «

I knew, long ago I knew, that my eyes were too open. That my eyes are too big and too wideangled.

That my eyelids open all the way to my forehead and my eyelashes curve so sharply that they expose the entire visible field in all its painful grandeur.

That was when I wished my superpower could be that, whenever I wanted, I could go blind.

Read the full texts on the ETC Plays Directory on the ETC website: <https://www.europeantheatre.eu/page/resources/plays-directory>

## Read an excerpt from 'The Darling' by Svenja Viola Bungarten, in partnership with Deutsches Theater Berlin/Germany.

Translated by  
Patty Kim Hamilton.

- Scene 3 -

*Franka is enthroned behind her desk, sharpening a knife. Mary sits in front of it on a very, very small chair.*

**MARY** My name is Marie.

**FRANKA** Mary. That's what I said.

**MARY** The y is short. It's European.

**FRANKA** It says Mary here.

**MARY** I read that you have to think big for yourself, so you have to think about money and then you have to think about the amount of money and then about the location of the money, by which is meant, the place where it should go and where you should be at the time the money arrives. And then I thought, I'll think my way out of Germany.

**FRANKA** But we are in Germany.

**MARY** My life plan.

**FRANKA** To be honest, your CV doesn't look like you have much of any kind of plan.

**MARY** For a while, I tried not to define my worth in terms of productivity or work.

**FRANKA** And how did that work out for you?

**MARY** It didn't.

**FRANKA** Somehow, you look familiar. You bear a resemblance to someone. Are you something ... like is it your generation? Do you do make-up on the internet or something?

**MARY** No.

**FRANKA** And what did you do before this?

**MARY** I did an installation on rising rents.

**FRANKA** A what?

**MARY** An installation.

**FRANKA** You built a mobile?

**MARY** No, we filled the floor of a whole story of an apartment building with sand -

**FRANKA** You built a sandcastle?

**MARY** The sand represented transience and -

**FRANKA** What do you know about transience, what are you, 12?

**MARY** I uh - I'm 27 -

**FRANKA** Are you prepared to memorize 120 faces in two days?

**MARY** Yes.

**FRANKA** Can you handle being attacked at a banquet because you are my employee?

**MARY** Yes.

**FRANKA** Do you have the skills to continuously bring beers into my nearby vicinity?

**MARY** Yes.

**FRANKA** Have you had past encounters with your superiors??

**MARY** Excuse me?

**FRANKA** Do you find me attractive?

**MARY** Uh -

**FRANKA** Or are you afraid of me?

**MARY** -

Both?

**FRANKA** Do you find yourself attractive?

**MARY** Uh -- I guess, -- I mean, -- no?

**FRANKA** The fact that you had to think about that.

**MARY** May I ask where I should sign?

**FRANKA** Excuse me?

**MARY** My contract?

**FRANKA** I haven't hired you yet.

**MARY** But you want to hire me.

**FRANKA** What makes you think that?

**MARY** Because 80% of your employees just resigned because you threatened an employee with a SWORD and you're facing a class action lawsuit.

**FRANKA** Unless you make yourself indispensable within two days, you will have to wait three months, like everyone else, until your probationary period is completed.

**MARY** Okay, I'd say that's - notices Franka running her finger over the tip of her knife - all -

**FRANKA** I WANT HER DUST UNDER MY FEET-

**MARY** You ok?

*FRANKA faints, slumps over.*

*Mary comes over quickly.*

**MARY** HELP!!!

*KARSTEN comes rushing in, holds something under her nose, she wakes up.*

**KARSTEN** The doctor said you shouldn't endure the pain until you pass out.

*Gives Franka a glass of water and tablets.*

**FRANKA** swallows the pills

That's enough! OUT!

*MARY goes to the door and waits for KARSTEN. But he stops next to Franka. He digs a pack of cigarettes out of his skirt pocket and offers Franka one.*

*FRANKA takes the cigarette.*

**MARY** Uh, just to be clear -

*Billows of smoke. Karsten closes the door.*

**MARY** Just, one moment - -

*Smoke. Door closes more and more.*

**MARY** Do I have the job?

*The door closes. Smoke billows and Mary alone. Headlight*

**MARY**

FINALLY MY TIME HAS COME. ALL MY STRIVING, ALL MY THEATER COURSES HAVE FINALLY PAID OFF. My name is Theater Mary, and just so there are no misunder-



### About Svenja Viola Bungarten

Svenja Viola Bungarten was born in Koblenz in 1992. She studied Scenic Writing and Narrative Film at the Berlin

University of the Arts. In 2016, she received the Berlin Opera Prize for her libretto POST NUCLEAR LOVE. Her plays have premiered at various theatres. With her feminist horror play MARIA MAGDA, she won the 2021 Heidelberg Play Market Author Award. The text was translated into Polish and performed in Krakow and Gdansk, among other places. In 2022, she received the 3rd Else-Lasker-Schüler Stückpreis for her play DIE ZUKÜNFTIGE. Her play GARLAND premiered at Schauspielhaus Graz in October 2021. Anita Vulesica's production was invited to the virtual nachtkritik- Theatertreffen 2022 and was awarded the Nestroy Prize 2022. In 2023, her contribution IM WALD to the play Männerphantasien after Klaus Theweleit (directed by Theresa Thomasberger) premiered at the Deutsches Theater, which she followed up on thematically with DER LIEBLING.

standings, I'm not nice. I'm just pretending to be. Because no one has ever gotten anywhere by being nice. Of course I want to save what can be saved. Especially my own sister. Even though I haven't been asked about how I'm doing for 3 years, even when I'm not doing so well for example, and I don't want to say that I'm doing badly, I'm doing well, very well in fact, my theater career is progressing, except for my uncertain professional future, a lack of daylight, few romantic prospects, 15 rejections from grants I applied for and rosacea spreading upwards from my lower legs, I'm doing really well. I can't complain. I live in a kind of apartment. And I'm alive. So I have something to give. Because there is an opportunity in my sister's problem, in her need. And if you sense an opportunity for a good story and you're not ashamed of taking advantage of a family member because she's obviously also taking advantage of you, then there's a chance that you're not the sidekick, but the main character this time.



# RESISTANCE NOW! TOGETHER



**RESISTANCE NOW TOGETHER** is the global campaign for artistic freedom. A collaboration between Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna and the European Theatre Convention (ETC), the campaign links events and performances about art and politics; civil society and the media; and the struggle for democracy in different countries.

The campaign has so far reached 100.000.000 readers in 50 countries, and champions the formal calls for artistic freedom in the 'Bratislava Declaration', the policy document issued during the International Conference Open Culture! organised by Open Culture! Platform in May 2025. Join us!  
[www.resistance-now-together.eu](http://www.resistance-now-together.eu)

# ETC SEASON 2025/26

Discover ETC's upcoming activities  
and how you can join in



ETC Conference at National Theatre Greece, 2025  
© Apostolis Koutsianikoulis

## A Network of Equals

Our activities bring theatre professionals across Europe together to make productions; learn and share best practice on key topics; and collectively fight for a stronger theatre sector. Our work takes place from Norway to Cyprus to Portugal to Ukraine.

We use our network's unrivalled knowledge and leading cultural partnerships to implement essential change at speed, ensuring the relevance of European theatre as part of Europe's rich cultural landscape, and build capacities for professionals to face challenges of today and tomorrow.

### **BREAK THE MOULD models new approaches and practices.**

It aims to:

- Increase international collaboration
- Access the untapped potential in the network
- Provide insights and direction for policy makers
- Propose solutions and contribute to shared goals

Check the ETC Website for the latest programme and grant information throughout BREAK THE MOULD!

[www.europantheatre.eu](http://www.europantheatre.eu)

ETC's work is made possible through co-funding by the European Union. ETC's current programme, **European Theatre: BREAK THE MOULD**, runs from 2024 – 2028 and consists of five key programmes:

- **ETC's Digital Theatre Programme** Experimentation with new technologies in theatre productions and processes
- **ETC's Next Theatre Generation Programme** Offering young artists a bridge between finishing their studies and establishing a career
- **ETC's Sustainable Theatre Programme** Leading the way for European Theatres to become climate neutral by 2030
- **ETC's Diverse Theatre Programme** Promoting marginalised voices and the stories that make communities richer
- **ETC's European Theatre Programme** Ensuring a strong identity - and secured place at the policy table – for European Theatre

ETC CONFERENCE & STAGES FORUM

# Riga 2025

ETC International Theatre Conference  
at Dailes Teatris Riga, 5–9 November 2025

Can theatres decide their own narrative? From 5–9 November 2025, Dailes Theatre in Riga/Latvia will be the host for the ETC International Theatre Conference, titled “Stage for Truth. Which Truth”.

This Conference comes as global politics slides towards hostility and conflict, and cuts to culture budgets are proposed to increase spending on defense. Terms like ‘nationalism’ and ‘duty’ have re-entered public debate, while demagogue leaders dismiss plans for inclusion and equality as ‘divisive’ and ‘political’.

In this context, attendees will reflect on the role for European theatres in understanding and addressing the conflicting ‘truths’ across society, such as:

- Nationalism is a reasonable agenda VS nationalism is dangerous and divisive
- Artistic freedom is an inalienable right VS artists must serve the national interest
- Theatres are a centre for resilience and social cohesion VS theatre is an altar of elite talent

There is good propaganda VS There is only bad propaganda  
Similarly, as crisis becomes the defining logic in society, how can theatres remain open, inclusive and sustainable? And how can theatres respond to ‘hybrid warfare’, in which bad faith actors seek to aggravate public opinion on key social issues?

‘Stages for Truth: Which Truth’ takes place in a region where geopolitical tension is lived experience: Dailes Theatre is located just 250 kilometres from the border with Russia, whose war with Ukraine now continues into the fourth year. It also follows the release of the RESISTANCE NOW TOGETHER manifesto, endorsed by ETC Members at the Spring 2025 ETC Conference, which stressed that art “unites us” and “crosses borders to fill us with empathy, understanding, possibility and belief.”

The full conference programme will include keynotes, panels, and practical sessions, and will monitor and reflect on the ETC Sustainable Action Code’s target for reaching climate neutrality by 2030. Attendees will also be invited to explore ETC’s flagship project co-funded by the European Union, BREAK THE MOULD (2024–2028), and join the final STAGES Forum, and the Latvian Theatre Showcase.

## Latvian Theatre Showcase

The goal of the Latvian Theatre Showcase is to introduce and showcase the vibrant world of Latvian theatre to the esteemed international community of professionals. It is important to give Latvian theatre the opportunity to show itself in all of its diversity.

ETC INTERNATIONAL  
THEATRE CONFERENCE

# STAGE FOR TRUTH. WHICH TRUTH?

Featuring the Final STAGES Forum  
During the Latvian Theatre Showcase

5 – 9 NOVEMBER 2025

Hosted by The Dailes Theatre,  
Riga / Latvia



Co-funded by  
the European Union

BREAK THE MOULD

# ETC's Digital Theatre Programme

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Experimentation with new technologies in theatre productions and processes.



From 'The Trial Against Humanity' by Det Norske Teatret, part of the ACuTe programme  
© Ole Herman Andersen/Det Norske Teatret

Artificial Intelligence is advancing at an exceptional rate. It is increasingly present in the day-to-day work in theatres. To accompany European theatres as they experiment with new tools and digital projects, disseminate learning from professional development activities, and ensure a human-centred digital transformation, ETC has developed the ETC's Digital Theatre Programme.

This includes 'Laboratory Retreats', with support for ETC members to partner with colleagues across Europe and spend a five-day retreat at the Academy for Theatre and Digitality in Dortmund/Germany. These retreats are designed for teams exploring the topic of digital theatre and will give the time, space and tools to test ideas, develop digital competencies, strengthen artistic collaboration in a supportive environment designed for innovation.

It also includes 'R&D Sprints', with funding to support digital project development and co-productions between two ETC Member Theatres under the consultancy of the Academy for Theatre and Digitality in Dortmund/Germany.

## Upcoming events and opportunities

### Laboratory Retreat (residencies of up to 5 days):

- Between January–March 2026  
Application Deadline: 14 Nov 2025
- Between April–June 2026  
Application Deadline: 14 Jan 2026

### R&D Sprints:

- During March 2026  
Application Deadline: 14 January 2025
- Expert Residencies: September–November 2026  
Open Call will be launched after the theatre team's R&D Sprint (Spring 2026)
- Production premieres: Season 2026/2027

BREAK THE MOULD

# ETC's Diversity in Theatre Programme

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**Empowering theatres to use different theatre formats –  
and a Dramaturgy of Care, rather than conflict –  
to invite and engage with diverse artists and audiences**



From 'ROOM RUMOURS' by Young Europe IV playwright Matin Soofipour Omam, staged at Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe (Germany) © Saša Mrak

It is essential to build organisations and productions that reflect the diversity of local communities across Europe. ETC's Diversity in Theatre Programme continues great strides made in previous years to expand the European Theatre canon and offer new opportunities for emerging writers and audiences.

ETC's award-winning artistic project of classroom plays for young audiences, Young Europe, returns for a fifth edition, connecting ETC member theatres across Europe to mentor emerging playwrights and create original productions for young audiences based on a 'Dramaturgy of Care' and wellbeing. A programme of masterclasses and new premieres complete the Young Europe V programme for both creators and audiences. In addition, new opportunities for artists in residence, and coaching sessions for professionals, further the practical application of gender balance and diversity to European theatre practices.

## Upcoming events and opportunities

- **17–19 September 2025:**  
Young Europe V official kick-off  
at Deutsches Theater Berlin
- **November 2025, January & March 2026:**  
Young Europe V Masterclasses
- **April 2026:**  
Young Europe V consortium & playwrights meeting during the  
Spring 2026 ETC International Theatre Conference in Goth-  
enburg, Sweden.
- **2026/2027 Season:**  
Young Europe V Premieres in classrooms across Europe
- **2027/2028 Season:**  
Staged readings of the final Young Europe V classroom plays  
at the Autumn 2027 ETC International Theatre Conference

BREAK THE MOULD

# ETC's Next Theatre Generation Programme

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Offering young artists a path from finishing their studies to entering the European Theatre market.



From 'Goodbye Lindita' by Mario Banushi, selected for the Fast Forward Festival 2023 at Staatsschauspiel Dresden © Theofilos Tsimas

ETC's Next Theatre Generation programme is designed to address the challenge for young theatre artists to establish a career after finishing their studies and enter the European Theatre market. To this end, it connects 3 long-standing ETC activities: the European Theatre Academy of masterclasses and training at the Festival d'Avignon; the ETC Alumni Network, which keeps participants in ETC-funded training schemes connected for knowledge and opportunity sharing; and the Professional Development programme of webinars, talks and workshops.

ETC's Next Theatre Generation Programme is supported by a collaboration with the Fast Forward Festival for Young Stage Directors at the Staatsschauspiel Dresden/Germany, and the Theatre National de Bretagne (TNB) in Rennes/France, to guide selected artists through a professional learning programme.

## Upcoming events and opportunities

- 13–16 November 2025:  
Fast Forward Festival Forum (Staatsschauspiel Dresden)
- 17–22 November 2025:  
TRANSMISSION at Festival TNB (Théâtre National de Bretagne)
- July 2026:  
European Theatre Academy at Festival d'Avignon

BREAK THE MOULD

# ETC's Sustainable Theatre Programme

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Leading the way for European Theatres to become  
climate neutral by 2030



From 'Shut Up and Play With Me' by Het Zuidelijk Toneel  
© Sofie Knijff

European Theatres can lead the cultural sector in adapting their processes and productions to the environmental reality facing society. ETC's Sustainable Theatre Programme aims to drive the ETC Membership towards our ambitious target of net zero emissions across theatre productions, buildings and operations by 2030.

Crucially, members benefit from a mixture of mentoring and peer-to-peer learning; the large-scale rollout of the ETC Theatre Green Book (TGB) tool; and the ETC TGB Self-Certification process to track their progress in a consolidated way. There are also new 'Learning & Travel Path' grants for staff at ETC Member Theatres to travel to key sustainability events to deepen knowledge on green issues.

ETC's Sustainable Theatre Programme is supported by a pioneering partnership with Renew Culture, the creators of the original Theatre Green Book.

## Upcoming events and opportunities

- **ETC Theatre Green Book (TGB) Learning & Travel Path:** 15 grants staff at ETC Members applying the Theatre Green Book to attend the STAGES Forum and the ETC International Theatre Conference, in Riga/Latvia in November 2025.
- **5–6 November 2025:** Final STAGES Forum in Riga, Latvia



The ETC Theatre Green Book (ETC TGB) logo can be used by ETC Member Theatres that have reached at least 'Preliminary' level. See more [www.europeantheatre.eu/etctheatregreenbook](http://www.europeantheatre.eu/etctheatregreenbook)

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BREAK THE MOULD

# ETC's European Theatre Programme

Ensuring a strong identity – and secured place  
at the policy table – for European Theatre with advocacy work  
and a new 4-year PR campaign



Signatories, including ETC President Cláudia Belchior, of the Bratislava Declaration calling for a European Artistic Freedom Act at the International Conference Open Culture! organised by Open Culture! © Simon Luptak

ETC aims to serve as the collective voice in EU cultural policy by organising high-profile events, such as the European Theatre Talks during the Festival d'Avignon, to bring policy makers and culture makers together and fight for issues such as freedom of artistic expression.

ETC's European Theatre Programme includes the large-scale PR campaign 'RESISTANCE NOW TOGETHER', with a key focus on events and performances that support artistic freedom across Europe. This campaign is a continuation of the 'RESISTANCE NOW: FREE CULTURE' open letter and partnership with Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) / Free Republic of Vienna, which reached 100.000.000 readers through a joint campaign in Winter 2024.

In addition, ETC's Roadshow will enable up to 12 representations of European Theatre at and with major European and international performing arts markets, offering increased access to European works from around the world.

## Upcoming events and opportunities

- July 2026:  
European Theatre Talks at the Festival d'Avignon



ETC CONFERENCE

# Gothenburg 2026

## ETC International Theatre Conference at Göteborgs Stadsteater – Backa Teater Backa Teater/Sweden, 23–26 April 2026

A conference for 100+ leading theatre professionals from 30+ European countries in the ETC network. Hosted by Folkteatern Göteborg and Göteborgs Stadsteater – Backa Teater, the event will consist of productions by the theatre with renowned artistic directors and curators.

The full ETC Conference programme will include a dynamic mix of artistic, professional and networking events on the key topics. There will be a range of performances, conference panels and speaking events. The thematic focus will be on External Relations.

### About Göteborgs Stadsteater – Backa Teater

Göteborgs Stadsteater (Gothenburg City Theatre) is Sweden's oldest city theatre and the first municipally run theatre in the country. The theatre is located at Götaplatsen, a central square at the top of Gothenburg's main boulevard, Avenyn. The building was constructed for the city's 300-year jubilee in 1923 and inaugurated as a theatre in 1934. Designed by architect Carl Bergsten, it is now listed as a building of outstanding cultural interest. Its elegant 1930s architecture - particularly the iconic stairwell - and the original stage machinery from Gothenburg's shipyard industry remain defining features.

The theatre's mission is to inspire, generate debate, entertain and provoke reflection. Its three main stages present a broad repertoire of classical and contemporary works from Sweden and abroad. As one of Sweden's leading cultural institutions,

the theatre combines artistic excellence with a strong public mission, engaging audiences in both timeless and contemporary stories.

**Göteborgs Stadsteater AB** (a publicly owned limited company) also includes Backa Teater, Stora Teatern and the Gothenburg Theatre and Dance Festival, creating a vibrant performing arts hub in Gothenburg.

**Backa Teater**, founded in 1978, is an independent part of Göteborgs Stadsteater with its own ensemble and artistic director. The house, a huge old ship plate factory, contains one of the largest black boxes in Europe with its main stage measuring up to 20 x 40 meters. Known for its innovative productions for young audiences, it has received numerous national and international awards and is recognised as one of Europe's leading theatres in its field. The theatre is also internationally recognised for its artistic innovation and its unique approach to engaging young audiences.

**Stora Teatern**, founded in 1859, is a historic performing arts venue that hosts guest performances in theatre, dance and music and serves as a main venue and partner of the *Gothenburg Theatre and Dance Festival*.



Göteborgs Stadsteater © Ola Kjelbye

# ETC Casebooks

Sharing cutting-edge learning from large European projects, with new casebooks on key topics of diversity, sustainability and digitality.



## Fabulamundi New Voices: Diversifying Theatre – A Casebook & Fabulamundi New Voices: Playwriting Practices in Theatre – A Casebook

The Fabulamundi New Voices twin casebook series, published by the European Theatre Convention, documents a cross-European effort to empower emerging writers and diversify theatre-making.

Fabulamundi New Voices: Diversifying Theatre – A Casebook looks at questions of cross-border collaboration among 13 partner organisations, with a shared focus on youth, diversity, and innovation in playwriting. It charts how diversifying the theatre sector can open up new spaces for dialogue, imagination and social change. Fabulamundi New Voices: Playwriting Practices in Theatre – A Casebook is a hands-on, practical exploration of the craft of playwriting for the next generation. It offers a toolkit for how to teach young people to write for the stage, including character-building techniques, collaborative dramaturgy and exercises for overcoming the blank page.

Now available.



## Future Laboratory: Artistic Research in Theatre – A Casebook

This casebook presents valuable insight and experiences from a variety of participants of the two-and-a-half-year 'Future Laboratory' project, a collaboration between 12 European performing arts institutions, led by Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg.

The project selected 15 artists for a research residency programme to engage with underrepresented and underserved communities in three cities and discover the European narratives of tomorrow. How can their research be supported? How can the collaboration with local communities – but also the relationship between the theatre and the artist/researcher – be structured? The casebook consists of more than 20 articles and reflections.

Now available.

Read an excerpt from an article in 'Fabulamundi New Voices: Playwriting Practices in Theatre – A Casebook', by Elise Wilk, Playwright at the University of Arts Târgu-Mureş (Romania)

## The Fish in the Coffin: A Personal Experience of Giving and Receiving Feedback

by ELISE WILK  
Playwright, University of Arts Târgu-Mureş (Romania)

"This workshop was very useful to you. It helped you realise that writing isn't your thing, so you don't have to waste your time with this activity in the future. Not everyone should be a writer."

I still can hear these words very clearly, coming from a well-known theatre director during a playwriting workshop in Bucharest. It was 2009. Two other young fellow playwrights and I were chosen out of 100 applicants to participate in a workshop led by a group of (by that time) very popular theatre directors. It was a workshop every aspirant playwright dreamt of being in. After the devastating feedback, my two colleagues gave up writing. It was hurtful and traumatic for me, too, but in the meantime, I knew that no one could stop me from doing what I like. So I continued writing.

I've been writing plays since I was 15. During this time, I received a lot of different feedback, ranging from "you're a genius" to "you'd better start a career in gardening". Art is subjective. So why should we trust feedback?

When it comes to teaching or running playwriting workshops, feedback is the most difficult part for me. During my Fabulamundi workshops, but also at the University of Arts in Târgu Mureş, where I'm teaching playwriting, I encourage emergent writers to find their voice and get the best versions of their "stories for the stage". But I often suffer from 'FOGWB' - fear of giving the wrong feedback. Is it possible that my advice doesn't help? Is it possible that because of my wrong feedback, they couldn't find the right form for their play? How should I not deliver feedback? How can I help them deal with negative feedback? And is there a feedback method that works 100%? ...

## ETC CASEBOOKS

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### STAGES: Sustainable Theatre – A Casebook

What have the partners in the Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift (STAGES) project (2022-2025) learned? How have they transformed their organisations? This casebook, comprising 21 original articles, is based on three sections. The first is Sustainable Productions, based on the innovative coproduction system created to tour urgent new performances on the climate crisis around Europe and as far afield as Taiwan – without moving any people or items.

The second, Sustainable Transformation, asks how STAGES partners implemented a new 'auto-analysis process', developed by Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne and the Competence Centre in Sustainability of the UNIL, as a guide for partners to identify key areas for sustainable change in their organisations. The final section is Sustainable Future, which reflects on the annual series of participatory Forum events and workshops that brought together artists, scientists and audiences to dream of 'desirable futures', addressing the need for holistic approaches.

*Publication in November 2025.*



### ACuTe: Digital Theatre – A Casebook

The Culture Testbeds for Performing Arts and New Technology (ACuTe) project (2022-2025) tests innovation across three key areas: **New Dramaturgies, Stage Design, Audience Engagement.** In this ETC Casebook, ACuTe partners share **insights on embedding cutting edge technologies in their digital productions across each of these three sections.**

Articles include 'Using Narrative Design in a theatre production', by De Toneelmakerij; 'Intimate Performances - Using New Technologies to Engage Smaller Audience groups', by Deutsches Theater Berlin; and 'Creating with – and without – the Deep Space Cave', by Ars Electronica.

*Publication due Spring 2026.*

Read an excerpt of an article from the upcoming STAGES Sustainable Theatre – A Casebook, by project partner MC93 – Maison de la Culture de Seine-Saint-Denis (France).

## Imagining a Desirable Future with MC93 Audiences

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**What can a sustainable theatre do for a city?** How might residents, neighbours, and audiences transform a cultural venue from an ecological perspective? Over the past two years, MC93 has been sharing experimental solutions to make the performing arts sector more socially and environmentally sustainable through the STAGES cooperation project, which operates at the European level. As part of this initiative, each season, the MC93 invites a group of audience members and neighbours to think through these changes during a workshop led by artist Louison Alix. Volunteers are recruited through a widely publicised call for participants. The groups are made up of people who will have met for the first time thanks to this opportunity.

The MC93 commissioned visual artist and actress Louison Alix to design this project. This young artist was born in the countryside and trained as an actress at ENSATT in Lyon. She performed in a show by Marguerite Bordat and Pierre Meunier, presented at the MC93. That is when the audience engagement team met her.

The project took place in two phases, each of which was presented to the public as part of a three-day event in April, Quartier Général: *Un théâtre durable ?*

From January to April 2024, a 'Green Team Audience' was formed to imagine MC93 in 100 years' time, mirroring the in-house 'Green Team' made up of volunteers. After workshops focusing as much on documentation as imagination, and interviews with several personalities, a sound and visual installation was created. The aim was to depict a transformed world, where culture is present in the city's every corner, where the theatre building is no longer really used, and where nature has partially reclaimed its rights. Among the many amateur artistic practices, professional artists produced astonishing works that are woven into the city. The mayor of the city was even unmasked as an AI...



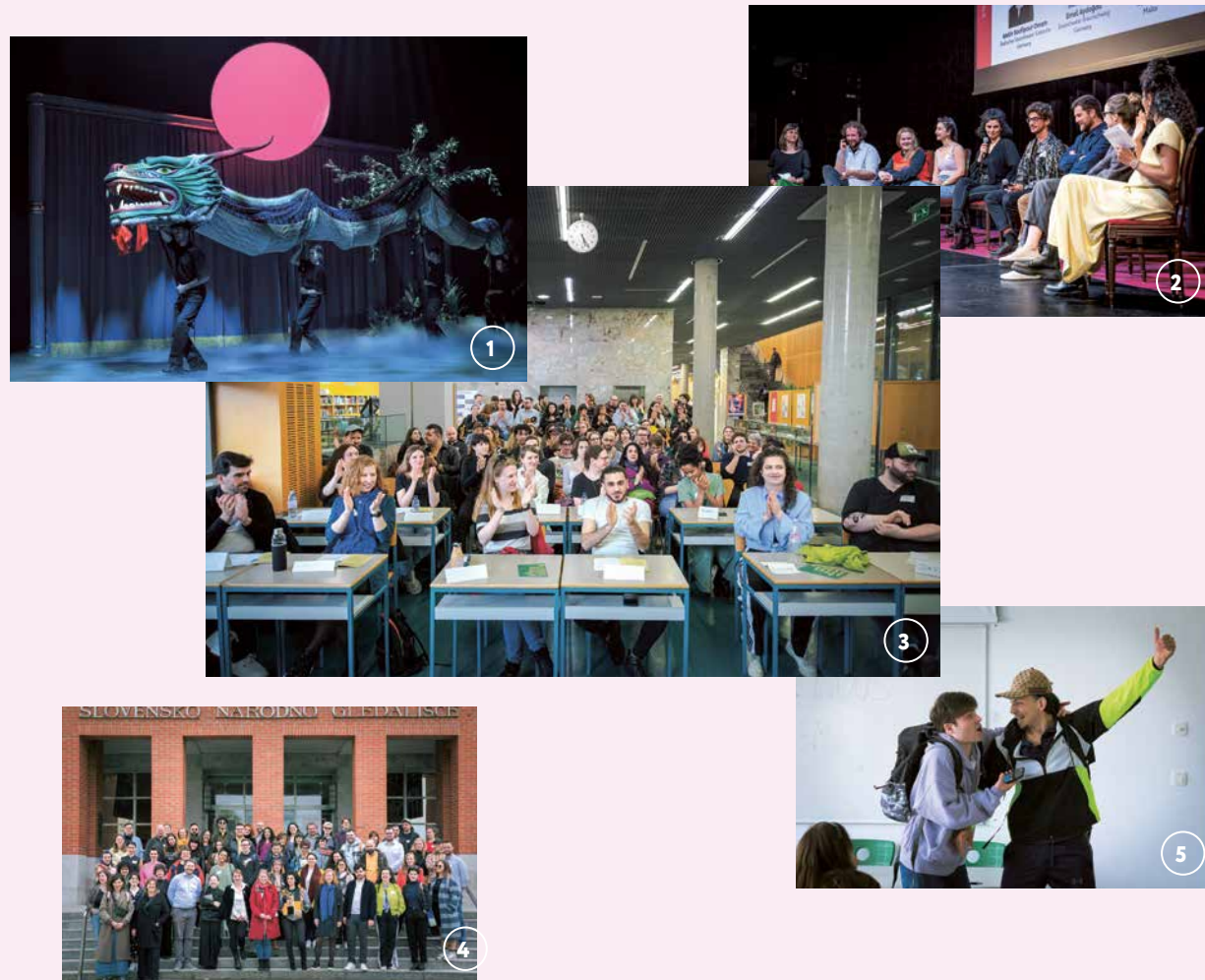
### ETC Library

Find a complete library of ETC publications online on the ETC website:

[www.europeantheatre.eu/online-library](http://www.europeantheatre.eu/online-library)

# About ETC

“Uncomplicated, personal and down to earth.” ETC Members meet regularly at ETC events and conferences around Europe to network, exchange ideas and receive new artistic inspiration. Join the 75+ theatres from 33 European countries currently benefitting from ETC activities!



① From 'One More Minute' by Národní divadlo – National Theatre Prague © Petr Neubert ② Young Europe IV Panel discussion at the ETC International Theatre Conference at SNG Nova Gorica, 2024 © David Verlič / ETC ③ From the ETC International Theatre Conference at SNG Nova Gorica, 2024 © Saša Mrak / ETC ④ Group Photo at the ETC International Theatre Conference at SNG Nova Gorica, 2024 © Saša Mrak / ETC ⑤ From 'Hassan and Moos' by De Toneelmakerij, at the ETC International Theatre Conference at SNG Nova Gorica, 2024 © Saša Mrak / ETC

# Calendar 2025/26

The key dates for ETC Member Theatres and an insight into ETCs international travels in the upcoming season.

## ETC Key Dates

5–9 November 2025  
**ETC International Theatre Conference**  
Dailes Teatris/Latvia

23–26 April 2026  
**ETC International Theatre Conference**  
Göteborgs Stadsteater – Backa Teater

July 2026  
**European Theatre Academy**  
Festival d'Avignon/France

## ETC... on Tour

March 2026  
**ACuTe Symposium at OAMK**  
Oulu/Finland



### More Events

Watch out for new ETC webinars, workshops and events on our website  
[www.europeantheatre.eu](http://www.europeantheatre.eu)

## Join Us

If you're interested in joining the ETC network, don't hesitate to contact us through the email below for more information!

[convention@europeantheatre.eu](mailto:convention@europeantheatre.eu)

# ETC Contact

## European Theatre Convention

c/o Deutsches Theater, Schumannstr. 13a, 10117 Berlin

convention@europeantheatre.eu

+49 30 28 441 460

europeantheatre.eu



## ETC Team

Heidi Wiley, *Executive Director*

Laura Gardes, *Project & Network Manager*

Teresa Pfaud, *Project & Administration Manager*

Vero Roza Risnovska, *Project Manager*

Christy Romer, *Communication Manager*

Özgül Demiralp, *Digital Communication Officer*

Žad Novak, *Project Management and Administration Assistant*

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