

Our Stories of Change

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Performance of *Twelfth Night* at the Young Vic, which joined ETC in Spring 2022.
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The Real Impact of ETC's Work

It is a **delight** to write that this new ETC publication *Our Stories of Change* will be the first in a series to illustrate the effect and impact of our current programme of activities: TRANSFORMATIONS – Recharging European Theatres and Audiences in a Post-Covid World. This wide-reaching and ambitious programme is only possible thanks to the support of ETC Members, and co-funding from the European Union.

At ETC, we organise more than 20 types of projects and opportunities, split across three strands of activity: Artistic Collaborations, Professional Development, and Theatre Advocacy. Activities range from our flagship international artistic projects (such as *Young Europe IV* and *Pipelines*) to the regular ETC International Theatre Conferences; upcoming Roadshow trips to Canada and Asia; major workshop and training programmes on sustainable development; masterclasses during the Festival d'Avignon; and 4-6 week residency experiences for emerging artists... Each of these activities also fits into one or more of our key themes of work: diversity, sustainability, and digital readiness.

We know that participating in just one of these activities can have wide-ranging changes for individuals and for our member theatres. So we have teamed up with our partners at On the Move, the European network for cultural mobility, to speak to people and theatres who have been involved in TRANSFORMATIONS activities and to discover their 'Stories of Change'. These are collected here, in a new annual ETC publication.

In this edition we're excited to share:

- How participating as a host theatre in the ETC Artist Residency Programme has helped Schauspielhaus Graz remain open to new ideas, people and audiences
- The personal and professional impact on Ukrainian director Natasha Syvanenko of travelling to work at Schauspielhaus Graz
- How ETC's sustainability courses shifted mindsets and organisational thinking at Cyprus Theatre Organisation (THOC)
- Similarly, how these training programmes helped Teatro Nacional D. Maria II structure their sustainability work and put it in an international context
- Why participating in Young Europe IV is having a big impact on Teatru Malta and the young playwrights it works with.

I hope you enjoy reading these 'Stories of Change', which I find most inspirational. For us at ETC, the concept of the Most Significant Change (MSC) that we will employ in this process is a great way to connect storytelling and participatory approaches, involving community members and field staff to capture the real impact of working internationally with ETC and build up a more complete picture of change in theatre overall. If you work at an ETC Member Theatre, or have been involved in an ETC activity as an individual, please do contact us if you would like to share your own story.

Until then, keep transforming!

Heidi Wiley

Executive Director, ETC



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Performance: Vernon Subutex, produced by Schauspielhaus Graz/Austria
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A Bet on the Future

with
Karla Mäder

Schauspielhaus Graz on how participating in the ETC Artist Residency Programme has helped them remain open to new ideas, people and audiences

Six years ago, Schauspielhaus Graz started hosting artists through the ETC Artist Residency Programme. They haven't looked back - they have participated every year since. Early career artists apply through an open call and are selected to join the creative team of a theatre production as assistant director or assistant dramaturge. "It needs time and dedication to make a programme like this work, but that is what international collaboration is all about. It's up to us to make the most of the opportunities available to us," explains Karla Mäder, Head Dramaturg at the theatre.

In April 2022, Franco-German director Magrit Coulon joined Graz's dramaturgical team for four weeks within the framework of the programme. "So many people come and go and they all change the way we think. I was impressed by one video performance Magrit did - she has an interesting artistic core and I would like to see how it develops in the future," Karla says. Schauspielhaus Graz's hosting culture goes beyond the programme itself: after seeing a video by young Ukrainian director Natasha Syvanenko on ETC's social media channels, discussing the reality for artists fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the theatre immediately reached out to her. By hosting and offering a professional opportunity to Natasha, the theatre was able to further develop an "awareness that we live in a time of crisis that will not go away quickly. Not just because of the war in Ukraine, but because of all the crises that we are experiencing at the same time. It reaffirmed the importance of becoming resilient as a society."

One of the beautiful things about theatre is that we invest a lot of time, energy and love in projects without knowing if they will pay off. But they do.

Karla feels that this investment in young professionals has an impact outside of the specific theatre she works for. “It is more about THE theatre,” she says. She didn’t want Natasha’s career potential to be lost, for instance, and hoped that through her time in Graz, Natasha could be empowered to continue - one day returning to Ukraine to revive the theatre scene there. Equally, participation in the programme was an opportunity for Magrit to spend more time in Graz and improve her German, opening up to the German-speaking theatre market and even more professional opportunities. In the spirit of this ongoing commitment to offering opportunities, Karla invited Magrit to return to Graz in September 2022 to support Natasha in staging a new production. “It is unusual for two directors to work together on a collaborative project, but they try to strengthen each other and that counts,” she explains.

Schauspielhaus Graz’s ‘Story of Change’ is based on developing a hosting culture of care. The motivation for becoming a host derives – in Karla’s words – from the “obligation as an institution to open up to everything: to new ideas, new people, new audiences, new aesthetics, new technologies. Curiosity is in the DNA of theatre.” It is also interesting to note that alongside the people chosen for participation in the ETC Artist Residency Programme, the theatre has begun giving others that applied but were not selected the opportunity to join the Schauspielhaus Graz team for a short period of time, offering all possible resources available. The theatre has therefore expanded its commitment to artist development, inspired by the ETC initiative, by giving emerging artists from around the world the opportunity to see how Schauspielhaus Graz operates, and to contribute to this work.

As Karla adds: “One of the beautiful things about theatre is that we invest a lot of time, energy and love in projects without knowing if they will pay off. But they do. Maybe not in the way we figured it at the beginning, but this approach is a bet on the future.”

Karla Mäder is Head Dramaturg at Schauspielhaus Graz. As a dramaturg with a wide range of interests, she sees herself as an impetus-giving background worker. The focus of her work lies in the cooperation with authors for concrete productions during the creation and preparation of plays and productions, as well as in networking the theatre in the city.



Beyond Nuts and Bolts

with
Harris Kafkaridis and Kiki Argyrou

THOC on how ETC's Sustainability Courses have shifted mindsets and organisational thinking at their theatre

Harris Kafkaridis is the newly appointed Technical Supervisor at Cyprus Theatre Organisation (THOC). "When I joined THOC, the first goal set for me from the upper management was to follow ETC's sustainability course for theatres, delivered by Ki Culture. It fitted me like a glove," he says. Being a stage designer himself, Harris explains that he has always been very interested in exploring new creative forms and thinking about how theatre can be more sustainable in its practices. "I work with the workshops that design and construct all elements on stage, and I was interested in how we can re-use these items, or how the raw materials we use can be more sustainable – but other topics tackled in the seminar were quite new for me."

For Kiki Argyrou, THOC's dramaturg, "the most important part of the course was that they allowed us to set a shared goal, not merely an artistic one, which has to do with a way of being – and this is very important." Harris adds that following his experience within the course and reflecting on the ETC Sustainable Action Code for Theatres, guiding theatres towards a more sustainable, conscious, mindful and just future by 2030, it was clear that every theatre has its own pace. "For some, success might be that they reach 10; for us, it might be another number. What is important is that there needs to be a plan and that it depends on us how far we take it forward," he says.

Participating in the ETC sustainability courses brings a new way of thinking about the right steps to bring about organisational change .

THOC has been a member of ETC in the past and after a short break, decided to re-join the network. Harris and Kiki stress that some sustainability policies and procedures already existed within the theatre, but more from an empirical point of view rather than a holistic approach to sustainable theatre management. For example, Kiki says, stage designers are required by contract to submit their list of props, and with the support of THOC's technical team, to see what exists already in the theatre and what they can use for their production. Furthermore, given its role within the theatrical landscape in Cyprus, THOC has also promoted circular thinking by facilitating the sharing of props and stage design elements with local independent theatre groups.

ETC's sustainability courses like the Ki-Futures Programme: ETC Pilot - Sustainability for Theatres encouraged THOC to bring these conversations more intensively within the organisation – especially among younger staff. They are exploring the possibility of a new pilot project that could combine stage designers' sustainable practices with an artistic vision, giving a challenge to a director to produce a sustainable play – both practically and thematically. “And most importantly we discuss how we can pass on the idea and the culture of sustainability to all our staff, how can we shift mindsets, how we can improve and advance our policies or give incentives beyond a ‘greenwashing approach’ by practicing what we preach,” explains Harris. Both Harris and Kiki underline the important role of the upper management in supporting change in this direction, and the existing positive environment within the organisation to work on these topics in a more structured way.

For Kiki and Harris, the impact of participation in the ETC sustainability courses is a new way of thinking and learning about the right steps to bring about change in the organisation for a better future. “If you get passionate about it, you try to go beyond the nuts and bolts and then you can also become more creative. We all need the scientific knowledge and the experiences of other theatres, as well as to know that you can always get in touch with a colleague elsewhere and ask how they applied something in their own work,” Harris says. “And I am positive change will happen - being a father of a two-year-old child, for me ‘tomorrow’ has a face and for this reason I am even more committed to this.”

Harris Kafkaridis is the newly appointed Technical Supervisor at Cyprus Theatre Organisation (THOC).

Kiki Argyrou is Dramaturg at THOC.



Personal and Professional

with
Natasha Syvanenko

Director Natasha Syvanenko on how travelling to work at Schauspielhaus Graz changed her understanding of the future

Natasha Syvanenko started working in Ukrainian theatres in 2014, combining directing with theatre management. In 2015, when she was at Kyiv National Academic Molodyy Theatre, ETC reached out and organised a three-day showcase of Ukrainian plays for a professional international audience, complemented by workshops and discussions on international cooperation. “We had absolutely no experience with international productions before,” she recalls. This cooperation resulted in the theatre becoming a member of ETC, which it remains to this day.

Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Natasha left the country and travelled to Poland. The ETC team contacted her. “They simply asked: how are you? how can we help you?”, she says. A few days later she was gathering videos from other Ukrainian colleagues that were disseminated through the ETC channels “to share the real situation and feelings of Ukrainian artists at that moment.”

While volunteering in a hostel for refugees in Poland she was also contacted by the Schauspielhaus Graz team. “I just received three emails. The first one was ‘Hello, we are Schauspielhaus Graz and we would be happy to invite you to work with us, tell us what you need’; the second one had many numbers – not common for us in Ukraine – dates and an address, details on the amount of money and the kind of support I could get, and I said of course I am coming. With the third email I just received my train tickets.”

It is amazing that someone from the state theatre is helping young artists to realise themselves in different theatres and countries

Arriving in Graz was not easy. Natasha doesn't speak German and she sometimes struggles, but has found a supportive community of fellow artists in residence hosted by Schauspielhaus Graz. Among them was Magrit Coulon, the ETC Artist Residency Scholar in Graz for 2022. "We became friends, we understood that on the cultural and emotional level we were very close to each other. We had a ritual of spending some time every evening together in the residence's beautiful garden to explore the events of the day. We spoke a lot about theatre, and I also had the possibility to talk about the situation in my country." In September 2022, they will work together on a play that Natasha is putting on stage after a suggestion by the Schauspielhaus Graz team. "Magrit needed to say no to other projects to come and share this interesting artistic process experience with me. I am totally happy with it," Natasha says.

Natasha notes that before coming to Graz, she was "closer to the Eastern European theatre bubble." Since she arrived she has watched 16 performances and had conversations with writers, performers, directors from all over Europe. "They come from totally different schools, they have different feelings of the world, understanding of the mission of the theatre... I will combine all those new instruments with my native Ukrainian school," she says.

Natasha acknowledges the change she is experiencing with the support of Schauspielhaus Graz is both personal and professional. "My conversations with the theatre staff push me to think about my plans for the future. In this stressful situation I find myself in, it is difficult to plan." She also underlines that Schauspielhaus Graz has the same approach with other interns and artists in residence as well. "It is amazing that someone from the state theatre is helping young artists in general to realise themselves in different theatres and countries." Finally, when thinking about the impact of the opportunity, Natasha says that "for me change comes with changing myself and my priorities, my emotions and my personal borders," which is what she is currently experiencing in Graz.

Natasha Syvanenko is a Ukrainian Theatre Director. Due to the war in Ukraine, Natasha Syvanenko moved to Austria, where she works as an associate theatre maker at Schauspielhaus Graz.



Playwrights Alex Weenink and Kurt Gabriel Meli, at the Young Europe IV workshop in Prague
©Jan Hromádko

Shortening the Distance

with

Mireille Estelle Camilleri and Christian Debono

Teatru Malta on how Young Europe IV is having a big impact on the theatre and the young playwrights it works with

“It was one of those projects that we heard about during an online Coffee Break meeting ETC organises. I am personally interested in youth and theatre written by young people for young people, and I immediately felt that this was an amazing platform to further provoke the work we were already doing in Malta,” says Mireille Estelle Camilleri, Head of Administration at Teatru Malta.

From 2021-2024, Teatru Malta is participating in Young Europe IV, ETC’s flagship artistic project for young audiences. It brings together 8 theatres and young playwrights from 7 different countries to write new plays for young people (12+). “The project helps us think - not only on the national level - but the international variations of what ‘forgotten voices’ means to each and every one of us,” explains Mireille. By staging new plays in classrooms, the project also aims to tell stories from non-dominant perspectives written by emerging playwrights representing marginalised voices within the European theatre canon. The plays will be staged in 2024 in the participating theatres and at a festival in Europe.

Christian Debono, Marketing Coordinator and Campaign Manager at Teatru Malta, joins Mireille in explaining that the main motivation for participating in Young Europe IV was that they liked the challenge. It was the first time Teatru Malta had applied to such a large scale collaboration project. After they were selected, the theatre received an ETC grant

The young playwrights are now in contact with the National Theatre of Slovenia in Nova Gorica, with the Young Vic in London... This is a huge thing for us.

for co-production and has become more active internationally within the network. They also benefitted from an intense week of exchange, specialised support and tailor-made feedback in Prague, alongside the other theatres and playwrights involved in the Young Europe IV process.

Teatru Malta's programming policy already included a commitment to programme at least one play written or directed by younger people per year and providing the necessary mentoring for this. For Young Europe they chose two writers they had worked with in the past, Alex Weenink and Kurt Gabriel Meli, inviting them to co-write a play. Knowing their strengths and weaknesses they proposed a mentor with complementary skills, Ruth Borg, to work with them. "To see two young theatre makers from the island having their work critiqued, reviewed and supported for development by an international audience and get feedback, will help these artists diversify their mind, their views and their creative platforms," says Christian. "And it's nice that all of a sudden this simple policy expanded in a wider horizon: a duo writing a play and developing something on the international level," adds Mireille. Participating in the project "suddenly shortens the distance", she says, reflecting on its impact on the young playwrights. "They are now in contact with the National Theatre of Slovenia in Nova Gorica, with the Young Vic in London... This is a huge thing for us because we pushed them into a more professional level, a higher-stake sort of platform."

Discovering new voices and giving platforms to young generations is part of what Teatru Malta understand as their mission. While Mireille is busy with the production part of the play, looking at how Teatru Malta can facilitate the research process for the duo in terms of organising workshops with adolescents, allowing the playwrights to be observers in a lecture hall, she dreams big. "I would love for this play to be part of the curriculum. Forgotten voices is a broad and important theme and I genuinely believe it is recurrent," she says. A Young Europe IV play written by young people for young people as school curricula. What a change this would be...

Mireille Estelle Camilleri is Head of Administration at Teatru Malta. She previously worked for the organisation as Artistic Programme Coordinator.

Christian Debono is Marketing Coordinator and Campaign Manager at Teatru Malta.



ETC as an Accelerator for Change

with

Pedro Penim, Rui Catarino *and* Vera Azevedo

Teatro Nacional D. Maria II on how ETC helped structure their sustainability work and put it in an international context

For Pedro Penim, the newly appointed Artistic Director of Teatro Nacional D. Maria II, sustainability is about “a 360° approach – being aware of everything that concerns the theatre in terms of social, political and environmental challenges, and our responsibility towards those issues”. He sees sustainability as “understanding the function of a theatre on a more symbolic level – as an institution setting the example”. That’s how D. Maria II has approached the concept in recent years, focusing a lot on its work with different communities and accessibility.

Rui Catarino, previously a member of the board of the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II who has now assumed the presidency of the organisation, explains that there was already an awareness of environmental sustainability in the theatre. For him, ETC acts primarily as an accelerator. “The initiatives that ETC has been promoting – the ETC Sustainable Action Code for Theatres, the Fundamental Course, and the Ki Futures Programme – were really enlightening, driving us to become a lot more conscious and bring sustainably in a formal and institutionalised way into the structure of our theatre – much like we do with procurement,” he says.

The Ki Futures programme in particular helped the theatre to put all the single actions into a proper plan, with concrete milestones and goals. “We

*We need people
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got the information in a structured way, a context to bring to our colleagues, and we also have peer pressure: if others can work this way, so can we. This has created a context that is a lot easier to navigate in and helped us put the pieces of the puzzle together,” Rui adds.

Both Pedro and Rui are committed to continuing and enhancing the work of their predecessors that has marked a new era for the National Theatre. They recently started piloting a ‘Green Team’, a key player in deploying a strategy for the future of the theatre, considering all areas from programming to maintenance and touring. “It has to do with people,” explains Rui, “people that inspire you and facilitate access to information, who lead the way. We need people that really push forward the boundaries of what we can do.” For him, change has to do “with connecting and realising that most of what we need to do has been considered by other people and we are not isolated islands.”

Piloting the Green Team has been entrusted to Vera Azevedo, who works in the theatre’s archives. She will coordinate the work of colleagues from different theatre departments. Both Vera and Rui stress that the Ki Futures course has enabled them to be much more in touch with the several components they have to address and different methodologies. Digitalisation practices are also at the heart of their sustainability work, Vera adds.

The theatre will be undergoing major construction work in the year to come. Although sustainability was not the main driver for this, sustainability concerns are being taken into consideration. Their main mission during the following year is to shift towards a more sustainable company model, fully integrating social, environmental, and economic considerations into their strategic and operational plans, so that sustainability “becomes second nature, irrespective of who will be the artistic director or the person in charge”. Pedro adds that this is now a commitment for the theatre that wants also to serve as an example for other (public) institutions in Portugal and beyond. “You know when you are not fulfilling your sustainability obligations. It’s a choice. If you choose not to do them, you are making a consciously bad choice.”

Pedro Penim is Artistic Director of Teatro Nacional D.Maria II.

Rui Catarino is President of the Executive Board at Teatro Nacional D.Maria II.

Vera Azevedo is head of the theatre’s Green Team at Teatro Nacional D.Maria II.

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Our Stories of Change is a collection of best practices from European theatres by the European Theatre Convention. It is the latest in a long line of ETC's artistic research and publications on European theatre developments.

Casebooks

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