



## Press release / For immediate release

### **“...public theatres abandon borders...”**

*European Theatre Convention blazes the trail for theatre at horizon 2020*

Berlin, March 2014: Upon the invitation of the new, 2013 inaugurated Théâtre de Liège, the first General Assembly of the European Theatre Convention (ETC) took place in Belgium from 13 to 16 March 2014. Over 80 theatre makers from more than 40 public theatres and cultural institutions representing 16 countries joined the meeting under the theme “Theatre, Nationalisms and Europe of Culture” reflecting different perceptions of Europe and pointing out that theatre - however strongly linked to language and national specificities - does not separate Europeans but connects us with each other far beyond the artistic aspect of our profession. In their opening statements, invited artists stressed how much theatre is a place to express and live our diverse European realities:

*“Language is not a border, it is meant to communicate and therefore it is in the literal sense of the word – a connector. [...] Language lends itself to translation... which can demolish endless borders. [...] In this sense, theatre can be unbounded.”*

Lot Vekemans, 14 March 2014

*Europe exists as a whispered secret in your theatre: [...]. It is possible to live with the impossible: our traumatic past, no one can live with genocides and plagues, in Europe we do, it is impossible to live with our people and languages that will never fully understand each other, it is impossible to live with that and that is possible in Europe.”*

Pieter De Buysser, 14 March 2014

Joining these statements the ETC expresses the strong wish to spread and defend the European values that it is based on and to promote freedom of expression of theatre makers and cultural institutions. It is in this perspective and alerted by the continuously aggravating situation for theatre makers and independent artists in Hungary that the European Theatre Convention stands in solidarity with the artists being besieged and brought more and more into line with the Hungarian government and suffering not only from severe financial cuts but from life-threatening measures.

*“We still believe that the theatre can make the world a better place, if those who create it, and those who behold it, ask the world questions which would ultimately find their answers - if not today, then tomorrow.”*

Dubravka Vrgoč, 12 March 2014

Concretizing the inaugural address of ETC president Dubravka Vrgoč, the network members announced the elaboration of 3 new work programs: “Young Europe 3”, “ETC Lab.” and the theme “World War I” as frame for new forms of coproduction and networking within the ETC. Main priorities of the network’s activities in the next years will be to enable and strengthen exchange and collaboration of theatre makers for new forms and contents, promoting and implementing language diversity in theatre programs and productions, the continuation and development of the efforts in the field of audience development maintaining the strong focus on young audiences as well as meeting the digitalization of our society with artistic and technological means.

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The “Art of Ageing” project, currently realized under patronage of playwright Etel Adnan, presented excerpts of the productions in progress as forerun for the upcoming “Art of Ageing” Festival programmed from 16 to 19 April 2015 at ETC member theatre Teatrul National Timisoara. The work of 5 genuinely new European productions will premiere in autumn 2014 in Berlin, Zagreb, Bratislava, Craiova, Karlsruhe, Timisoara, Braunschweig and Heidelberg.

Besides the working sessions and project showcases this conference presented the first results of the ETC commissioned audience development study led by the Center for Audience Development of Free University Berlin (ZAD). ZAD representative Achim Müller formulated recommendations embracing regular data collection for theatres in a two years frequency and the implementation of an online interface connected with a helpdesk in order to ease and format the procedure. Following these recommendations the European Theatre Convention will engage in developing during the next years an e-platform as knowledge and exchange base with a wide range of services and functionalities integrating the ZAD online interface and helpdesk.

Beneficiaries of this year's ETC Performance Exchange Program were announced at the conference: Théâtre de la Manufacture CDN de Nancy (FR), SNG Drama Maribor (SI), Slovak National Theatre Bratislava (SK), Staatstheater Wiesbaden (DE), Schauspiel Leipzig (DE), ZKM Zagreb (HR), Deutsches Theater Berlin (DE) and Teatrul National 'Marin Sorescu' Craiova (RO).

Cantieri Teatrali Koreja based in Lecce/Italy joined the ETC as new associated member.

The next General Assembly will take place from 27 to 30 November 2014 at Staatstheater Braunschweig, Germany, inviting European theatre professionals to attend Fast Forward – the European Festival for emerging young stage directors. END.

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