



Paris, May 12, 2009

**Invitation to the press conference**  
**May 14, 2009 at 14h00, Ankara, Turkey, main train station, VIP lounge**

**Orient-Express**  
**A European theatre journey – An International Festival**  
**11 cities - 6 countries – 1 train**

**Journey: May 14 – July 5, 2009**  
**Festival: July 9 – 19, 2009, Port of Stuttgart, Germany**

Under the umbrella of the European Theatre Convention (ETC) six nation-wide renowned ETC partner theatres collaborate on the unique artistic "Theatre Orient Express" project that will leave Istanbul and head towards the west on May 14, 2009. Train stations in countries throughout Europe will be filled with theatre and cultural activities. Six new plays, one from each participating ETC partner theatre, have been commissioned for the project and will be performed on the train. The theatre project examines "European identity", expectations of and past experience with the European unification process, and issues like escape, expulsion, mobility and settling down. Following the premiere in their hometowns, each ensemble will travel by train to the next city where it will perform again and meet the next ensemble, which, in turn, will perform its premiere. In cooperation with the ZDF Theaterkanal and the Filmakademie Ludwigsburg a film crew accompanies the artistic teams on the train and will document the project.

### **European theatre journey**

The "Theatre Orient Express" begins its journey in Ankara the 14 of May 2009. After four performances in **Ankara (May 14-17)**, the train will stop in **Istanbul (May 21-23)**, Turkey then in **Bukarest (May 27-28)**, **Craiova (May 29-30)**, **Temeswar (May 31-June 1)**, Romania, **Novi Sad (June 6-9)**, Serbia, **Zagreb (June 12-17)**, Croatia, **Ljubljana (June 19-20)** and **Nova Gorica (June 21 & 23, 24)**, Slovenia and in **Freiburg (July 4-5)**, Germany on its way to the final destination **Stuttgart**, Germany.

The train will stop in the train stations of each participating theatre's city and one of the wagons will be transformed into a full functioning theatre stage. The theatre wagon has been constructed as a collaboration project between the Turkish State Theaters and the Turkish State Railway Company. The commissioned plays will be performed in the country of its origin and then follow the train to the next country to be performed there. Because of this chain system, and since the Turkish production will follow the train all the way and be performed in all the different countries, there will always be actors from three different countries present on the train.

### **International festival**

On the 5th of July 2009 the Orient Express reaches the final destination - the Port of Stuttgart. There, all the participants will be united during the Orient Express Festival and perform the six plays on the rolling stage. The festival will last for two weeks, from 9th to 19th July.

European Theatre Convention - Convention Théâtrale Européenne

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### **Project background**

For the last 200 years European identity has been defining itself as 'occidental' in opposition to the 'oriental' culture and identity. The orient, as a Western or European projection of a geographical, political and cultural sphere, served as the 'other'. It was a mirror for Western political and colonial interests. At the same time, the orient was a place of dreams and imaginations, of desire and sexuality, of spirituality and miracles. When the great railways were built in the nineteenth century, the orient became accessible to European businessmen and tourists. The Orient-Express itself connected Western Europe (London and Paris) with South-Eastern Europe and finally Turkey. Istanbul, the former Constantinople was the final destination of the legendary and luxury train. During World War I the route altered, but the Orient-Express remained to be a symbol of conquering space and time and reaching out to the Near East. After World War II, a wave of migration went along the route of the Orient-Express: workers from Turkey came to the European market as cheap labour force. When their families followed, a new cultural exchange occurred in the urban centers of Europe: Islam and the 'oriental' culture spread all over Western Europe. After the collapse of Stalinist socialism in Eastern Europe and the reunification of the divided continent, the Bosphorus marks again the border of cultures. These days several countries joined the Schengen convention, among them Slovenia, Rumania and Bulgaria. Today the rapid change in Europe is driven by economic and political interests. But without the formation of a new cultural identity, the European project cannot succeed.

The aim of the Theatre Orient Express project is to let the train be a moving theatre lab for young artists, a place of theatrical exploration of 'otherness' and identity along the route from Istanbul through South-Eastern Europe to Germany, from east to west.

### **The collaboration partners**

Located in the premises of the National Centre of Theatre in Paris, the ETC is an association of national theatres, which was constituted in 1988 to promote contemporary playwriting and multilingual theatre creation while focusing on the support of young theatre talents throughout Europe. Today, the network is gathering 40 national theatres in over 20 countries in Europe. Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008, the objectives of the ETC were redefined based on the continuous need to encourage the emergence of a European citizenship and to defend the diversity of European languages. With a wide range of artistic activities, the ETC encourages transnational mobility of artists and theatre professionals, disseminates European drama works and offers a platform of exchange cultural values through international collaboration projects beyond national borders.

The ETC is proud to present «Theatre Orient Express» in collaboration with its partners:

### **ETC partner theatres**

The « Theatre Orient Express » is an artistic cooperation project between these ETC member theatres :

- Schauspiel Stuttgart (Germany)
- Turkish State Theatre Ankara (Turkey)
- Teatrul National « Marin Sorescu » Craiova (Romania)
- Serbian National Theatre, Novi Sad (Serbia)
- Youth Theatre Zagreb (Croatia)
- Slovenian National Theatre, Nova Gorica (Slovenia)

### **Supporting partners**

- Theater Freiburg (Germany)

## The plays

Each ETC partner theatre has selected its artistic team. We are proud to announce that some of Europe's most critically acclaimed authors of contemporary drama such as Matei Visniec (Romania), Tena Štivičić (Croatia) and Soeren Voima (Germany) accepted to join the "Orient Express".

| Country  | Title of Play         | Author                   | Director                 |
|----------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Turkey   | Ex-Press              | Mustafa and Övül Avkiran | Mustafa and Övül Avkiran |
| Romania  | Occident Express      | Matéi Visniec            | Alexandru Boureanu       |
| Serbia   | As If                 | Branko Dimitrijević      | Predrag Štrbac           |
| Croatia  | Seven Days in Zagreb  | Tena Štivičić            | Tijana Zinajić           |
| Slovenia | Titanic Orchestra     | Christo Bojcev           | Matjaz Latin             |
| Germany  | 80 Days and 80 Nights | Soeren Voima             | Christian Tschirner      |

## Turkey

**EX-PRESS**, author and director: Mustafa and Övül Avkiran

**Performances:** **Ankara:** May 14 & 16, 21h00, **Istanbul Haydarpaşa:** May 20, 21h00, **Istanbul Sirkeci:** May 23, 21h00, **Bucarest:** May 27, 22h00, **Craiova:** May 29, 22h00, **Timisoara:** June 1, 20h00, **Novi Sad:** June 8, **Zagreb:** June 17, **Ljubljana:** June 19, **Nova Gorica:** June 23, **Freiburg:** July 4, **Stuttgart:** July 10 & 11

They are all cramped in a wagon; they are going from East to the West. Where they come from is definite, and so are their languages, religions and cultures. They have come out from where they come; they have left entirely what they have, they leave behind them. Knowing where they want to go without windows, without light and without air, they are going without light but not knowing where they are going. They are going with their accompanying baggage; they are going with what they put in their own baggage. They are going to the West with their pasts crammed into their baggage, keeping culture of the East in their minds. They are going towards hope with hesitation... they are going to the west not waiting them. To the West being afraid of the East, of the people having common fate, where they come is definite, what they want to do is definite but where they are going to is not definite, they have left themselves into the hands of those they are given into mercy.

The place where they boarded the train has become ex for them, so have they for their homeland. As for the entire of journey, it will be challenging; there will be persons who are left back on the road. There will be new companions. New songs, new dances, new accounts will be added to former ones, which are the stories to what extent they are real and to what extent they are fictional.

## Romania

**OCCIDENT EXPRESS**, author: Matei Visniec, director: Alexandru Boureanu

**Performances:** **Bucarest:** May 28, 22h00, **Craiova:** May 29 & 30, 20h00, **Timisoara:** May 31 & June 1, 22h00, **Novi Sad:** June 7, **Stuttgart:** July 16 & 18

The Teatrul National 'Marin Sorescu' will be working with the Romanian writer Matei Visniec. After the fall of communism in Romania, in 1989, Matei Visniec became one of the most performed playwrights in the country, with more than 30 plays put on around the country. In 1996 the National Theatre of Timisoara organized a Matei Visniec Festival with 12 companies presenting his plays. His international career as a playwright started in 1992, with the play *Horses at the Windows* performed in France, and *Old Clown Wanted* at the "Bonner



Biennale". Since then, Matei Visniec has had more than 20 plays performed in France, Germany, United States, Denmark, Austria, Poland, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Brazil, Romania and Moldavia. Matei Visniec will call his play for the project "The Occident Express".

### **Serbia**

**AS IF**, author: Branko Dimitrijevic, director: Pedrag Strbac

**Performances:** Novi Sad: June 9, Zagreb: June 12, Stuttgart: July 17 & 18

The Serbian National Theatre Novi Sad will be working with the playwrights Branko Dimitrijevic for their play. Branko Dimitrijevic - playwright and novelist, born in Belgrade, graduated as a dramaturg at the Belgrade University, got his Masters in Playwriting at the University of Iowa, wrote for magazines, radio, television, film and theatre. His three novels were published in Belgrade, one of which, OKTOBERFEST, had been made into a film of the same title. Many of his plays for children and adults have been produced. At the moment Branko works as a dramaturg at the Serbian National Theater in Novi Sad, where his latest play, GODOT ON A HOT TIN ROOF has been produced.

### **Croatia**

**SEVEN DAYS IN ZAGREB**, author: Tena Štivičić, director: Tijana Zinajić

**Performances:** Novi Sad: June 6, Zagreb: June 13-16, Ljubljana: June 20, Nova Gorica: June 21, Stuttgart: July 10 & 11

The Zagreb Youth theatre has decided to work with the young writer Tena Štivičić. Tena was born in Zagreb in 1977 and studied in the Academy of Drama Art there. After complementing studies in London, she has taken part in theatre events such as Future Perfect and the Paines Plough Young Writers Programme. Štivičić has written plays both in her native Croatian and in English. Her major works in English include: Can't Escape Sundays, Perceval, Psssst, Two of Us, Goldoni Terminus, Fragile!, and Fireflies. Her plays have been produced in at least ten European countries. Her play Fragile! has won several awards at festivals in Croatia and Slovenia.

### **Slovenia**

**TITANIC ORCHESTRA**, author: Christo Bojcev, director: Matjaz Latin

**Performances:** Nova Gorica: June 24, Stuttgart: July 17

Four homeless men living in a closed train station are waiting for a train to take them away from their misery. One day, a train actually stops – but only to leave another "lost soul" with them. Soon after, life at the train station begins to take bizarre and magic turns.

Titanic Orchestra is a satirical-comical story, bursting with witty dialogues and situations that the characters define. It is a utopian image of world, a story of the end of a civilization and of the never - ending human aim for a bitter life. Using sophisticated humor, Bojcev talks about a society of false morals and values. Orchestra titanic is not a political story, it is a story of man.



## Germany

**80 DAYS AND 80 NIGHTS**, author: Soeren Voima, director: Christian Tschirner

**Performances:** **Ankara:** May 15 & 16, 21h00, **Istanbul Haydarpasa:** May 21, 21h00, **Istanbul Sirkeci:** May 22, 21h00, **Bucarest:** May 28, 20h00, **Craiova:** May 30, 22h00, **Timisoara:** May 31, 20h00, **Freiburg:** July 5, **Stuttgart:** July 9, 12, 13 & 19

Soeren Voima was born in Wittgensdorf (Chemnitz) in 1972. He started writing while he was still studying behavioral biology. In 1995 he founded the writers' group that has been named after him. Since 2003 he has been working on his own projects. His plays have been performed at the Schaubuehne in Berlin, Schauspiel Frankfurt, Schauspiel Koeln, Schauspielhaus Bochum and Schauspiel Stuttgart.

Soeren Voima's play for the Orient Express will be called "80 days and 80 nights". The play is inspired by Jules Verne's famous novel "Around the World in Eighty Days". Soeren Voima transforms the main idea by making the traveling within eighty days not a willingly undertaken adventure, but a result of a curse: In a small town in Romania guest workers from South East Asia are producing toys – teddy bears – for the German market. One of the teddy bears believes to be a native German toy and mocks the workers. They give him the curse that he has to travel for eighty days, before he will reach Germany.

## Orient Express Team

Project Manager: Christian Holtzhauer, Schauspiel Stuttgart  
Artistic concept: Schauspiel Stuttgart (Germany)  
Turkish State Theatre Ankara (Turkey)  
Teatrul National « Marin Sorescu » Craiova (Romania)  
Serbian National Theatre, Novi Sad (Serbia)  
Youth Theatre Zagreb (Croatia)  
Slovenian National Theatre, Nova Gorica (Slovenia)  
International Coordination: Pierre-Yves Bazin  
Technical Coordination: David Wrobel,  
Tourmanagement and  
Translation: David Maß  
Filmteam: Martin Andersson and Steffen Düvel (Camera and director), Christian Müller (Producer), Inci Ünsal (Camera)

## Contact

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