

## It's not about them – it is about us!

Bringing the burning issue of demographic change to Europe's stages. An opportunity for global ageing societies. ETC's European theatre project "The Art of Ageing" closes successfully in Timisoara, Romania and brought shift of mind-frames to theatre community

**Berlin, 23 April 2015:** The two year creative theatre research project **The Art of Ageing** by the European Theatre Convention (ETC) has come to a successful close last weekend with the **Art of Ageing – 1<sup>st</sup> European Theatre and Science Festival** at the Romanian National Theatre in Timisoara. Offering an artistic contribution to the ongoing discourses and debates on global demographic challenges in Europe was the specific goal of the project and investigating how theatre and access to culture play a crucial role in the larger social and societal context of this topic. On the occasion of the festival, the research results, five theatre performances, all co-productions of ETC member theatres based on new plays written by Nino Haratischwili, Peca Stefan, Ivor Martinić and werkgruppe2 were staged to an international professional audience from 19 countries and the people of Timisoara to raise awareness of the ageing topic through new stories in a European context.

During the festival, the creative research documentary **Bringing the burning issue of demographic change to Europe's stages** has been launched. It provides in-depth information on all Art of Ageing theatre collaborations, embedding the artistic work in the wider social and political context with contributions of field experts, academics and scientists, ensuring that a legacy of the project can be developed. The festival furthermore offered for the first time the opportunity for an interdisciplinary exchange and dialogue with those experts to create new knowledge and inspirations. An important part of the festival was dedicated to develop new practices and artistic ideas for innovative theatre education and community outreach programs involving an intergenerational audience.

Keynote speaker Dr. George W Leeson, Co-Director of the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing pointed out, that the topic of ageing has been around for a long time, in Europe population aged since the French revolution, but what is new is that globally the same developments are observed with an unprecedented pace covering only the last 30 years, instead of 200. In the coming years, the majority of society will be aged over 60, than being under 50, with a continuously increased life expectancy. This different stage of our societal change started to be discussed by demographers first as problem, then as a challenge and presents today an opportunity. And this is widely considered to be an achievement of mankind, to age and live longer. He called **the 21<sup>st</sup> century the century of centenarians**, mainly due to three demographic drivers, fertility, mortality and migration which are increasingly influenced by climate change. Stuart Kandell, US based artist and global pioneer in the field of creative ageing, underlined in his interactive workshop the importance to change attitude when working with and involving older people: **"It's not about them – it is about us!"** Guest panelists evoked behavioral and value patterns in generation heritage, stressed the need for art to ask questions when even science doesn't have answers yet to influence civil society considering ageing through art, and shared information on policy-making instruments developed by the AGE Platform Europe and the WHO to contribute to **"Age friendly environments"**.

European Theatre Convention - Convention Théâtrale Européenne

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In view of those perspectives for the coming decades, theatre artists all agreed that a shift of mind-frames has to take place in society. And new theatre work needs to be developed for a more **intergenerational theatre** audience, bridging younger, middle and older generations alike and creating a better understanding for each other in our very segmented and target specific society. Art can help to overcome this segmentation and theatre is a place to form a community, being inclusive and participatory. A place to be not lonely, a place for the art of ageing.

During the festival, five new theatres joined Europe's theatre network ETC: from Austria Schauspielhaus Graz and Landestheater Linz, from Italy Fondazione del Teatro Stabile di Torino, from Hungary Pesti Magyar Szinhaz in Budapest and from Georgia Kote Marjanishvili State Drama Theatre in Tblisi.

ETC's next theatre conference takes place at Fondazione del TeatroDue in Parma, Italy from November 12- 15, 2015.

**Multimedia resources and more information:**

**Creative research documentary, [click here](#)**

**Festival brochure, [click here](#)**

**Festival trailer, [click here](#)**

**[www.artofageing.eu](http://www.artofageing.eu)**

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**Notes to Editors** –The European Theatre Convention (ETC) founded in 1988, is a non-profit-making membership organization representing the publicly funded theatre sector in 20 countries. Its aims are to create, protect and promote theatre art and its linguistic diversity in Europe and beyond; to act as a transnational theatre network to foster cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; to act as a platform for professional exchange, development and capacity building of theatre-makers in an international context and to advocate for the public theatre sector at EU, member state and local levels. Further information – [www.etc-cte.org](http://www.etc-cte.org)

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**Partners**

The festival is a joint collaboration coproduced by the European Theatre Convention, Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, Staatstheater Braunschweig, Teatrul Național Timișoara, Teatrul Național ‚Marin Sorescu‘ Craiova, Gavelle City Drama Theatre, Theater und Orchester Heidelberg, Slovak National Theatre Bratislava and Deutsches Theater Berlin.

**Supporters**

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