



# Designing the New Decade

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**We Help  
Build Europe**

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**Season's  
Highlights**

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**ETC – ENGAGE  
Activities**

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The open-air stage in front of Deutsches Theater, Berlin, June 2020  
© Arno Declair

## Foreword

What were some of the most emotionally challenging images this year? Certainly those showing theatres with seating arrangements that tear the audience apart – a tribute to legitimate health and safety concerns. And yet, these pictures arrived after theatres all over Europe (and the world) had been closed for months, and therefore were almost perceived as a sign of hope for a sector immensely affected by the crisis provoked by Corona.

While the Commission has quickly implemented a series of horizontal measures to support Europe's suffering sectors, it has also launched various initiatives targeted specifically towards culture. The European networks played a very important role in conveying the sector's real needs and concerns. The European Theatre Convention was obviously one of those essential partners the Commission needs to understand not only the current situation but also the developments in the theatre sector more generally.

Last year in November, a mapping exercise showed the challenges facing the theatre sector in Europe and pointed to ways forward if we want to help shape the European theatre space. First and foremost, it is important to understand the differences and establish what Europe can do, together with its stakeholders, to fill gaps and add value. In that sense, a study to evaluate the sector more in detail and propose concrete action was launched only recently. It will hopefully come in due time to also take account of the newest developments resulting from the crisis.

ETC has continually drawn attention to the topics now relevant for the sector and has actively worked in the virtual sphere, one that we have learned to live with very concretely these past few months and that will stay with us for a while. For the Commission, the use of digital technology in the cultural and creative sector will continue to be a relevant contribution for the achievement of its sustainability goals. ETC has also put other highly relevant questions on the European table such as equal opportunities for women in the sector or the inclusive potential of art. These elements will also play an important role for the future Creative Europe programme which is scheduled to begin in 2021.

We therefore very much look forward to the European Theatre Forum this November, part of the European Theatre Initiative and taking place in the frame of the German EU presidency. We hope that, together with other partners from the theatre and the performing arts world, we will be able to create momentum for theatre in Europe.



**Barbara Gessler**

*Head of Unit Creative Europe, Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission*

Photo Barbara Gessler © private

# We Help Build Europe

## The status quo of ENGAGE: the 2020-2021 season

One of the most complex challenges we face in the theatre industry right now is finding ways to expand our audience. We are seeing that, in fact, spectators who love the theatre and are used to it are coming back. And, with reduced seating capacity, our theatre halls are well-filled. But how can we reach more distant audiences, young people, students? Even if a real opportunity exists, because of the many activities that cannot take place right now, the appeal of the performing arts is weakened by cumbersome safety precautions. We therefore must reflect on this question in broader terms.

Historically, theatre has been instrumental in conveying philosophical, moral and political ideas, especially during the Enlightenment. It was Peter Brook who said theatre played the role of the scribes in the Middle Ages. Critics and word-of-mouth reporting about theatrical experiences, concepts and aesthetics helped spread the ideas conveyed through those very experiences throughout Europe.

How can we ensure that theatrical experiences, concepts and aesthetics continue to convey ideas that will spread and help build Europe? How are theatres engaging with their audiences during this first season, with mandatory health and security measures in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus? How are theatres engaging with one another and across borders? How can we ensure encounters, debate and dialogue when the new normal – i.e. social distancing – is in complete contrast to our profession?

2020 marks the fourth year of ENGAGE, ETC's international programme for European theatres. And, despite our travel from country to country being limited, we are determined to spread our ideas, concepts, and aesthetics to inspire theatre colleagues and audiences across the continent. Our new

ETC casebook publications on youth theatre, participatory theatre and diversity in theatre share practices and insights on how to engage with new and broader audiences. Our professional development programme offers a wide range of activities using virtual meeting spaces, addressing topics from sustainability and green theatre to new dramaturgies. Highlights of the European stage show ETC member theatres open again, with new performances adapted to the current rules, after a monthslong battle to prove the systemic importance of theatre.

The concept of systemic importance categorises society. It is a concept that divides society. It has created a problematic criterion for differentiation that has the potential to constitute values and evoke social divisions. For "systemic importance" always implies its downside: "systemic un-importance," that is to say everything that is considered dispensable. But what would a society look like if everything "systemically unimportant" – stories and humour, sporting events and favourite playlists, theatre performances and films, questions of existence and broadening one's horizon – were to dwindle away? The "systemically important" professions ensure that we live, yes, but how we live is being decided elsewhere...

EU Commissioner Gabriel told the members of ETC: "Culture is not a luxury; it is an important social and economic factor to overcome any crisis! For this reason, if the health and safety measures are in place, theatres should reopen because they contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of our citizens and ultimately of our society." We are proud to be organising the first ever European Theatre Forum, within the framework of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU and in cooperation with the German Minister of State for Culture and the Media and the European Commission in November 2020, ensuring that theatre has a strategic voice in policymaking decisions.

This year's ETC Journal features two articles on the essence of this theatre season, asking the questions: How

can we engage with our audience and how can we remain open to do so? The article by the Italian dramaturge Davide Carnevali, 'How Can I Convince My Aunt That Theatre Could Be of Interest to Her?', stresses the desire and responsibility to use the available tools of theatre to ENGAGE with our audiences. Ulrich Khuon, artistic director of Deutsches Theater DT Berlin and president of the German Theatre and Orchestra Association, shares with us his own battle in reopening the theatre, which he finally won after a phone call from the German president. His text entitled 'Everything at Once' is the slogan of this year's DT theatre season and first appeared in the theatre's season programme.

This season will be about the survival of our entire sector, it will be about our means to ENGAGE – with audiences, with policymakers, with each other – to help build Europe, and the open society we value. For this to succeed we need solidarity and strong partnerships. As a network of European theatres, ETC thanks the European Commission for its continued financial support of and collaboration with ENGAGE.



Heidi Wiley & Serge Rangoni  
ETC Executive Director and ETC President

Photo Heidi Wiley © private, photo Serge Rangoni © Plissart



First online European Theatre Academy in July 2020  
© ETC

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ETC Communication Seminar in October 2019, Berlin © ETC

*Rage* by Deutsches Theater Berlin for Young Europe III © Arno Declair

Ulrich Khuon supporting Kirill Serebrennikov in June 2020, Deutsches Theater Berlin © Luisa Männel

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# How Can I Convince My Aunt That Theatre Could Be of Interest to Her?



by Davide Carnevali  
Translated by Susannah Tresilian



From top:

*Una poesia per Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Manifesto per un nuovo teatro), A Poem for Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Manifesto for a New Theatre)* written and directed by Davide Carnevali © May Zirkus / TNC

*Lorca sogna Shakespeare in una notte di mezza estate (Lorca dreams of Shakespeare in a Midsummernight)*, written and directed by Davide Carnevali © Francesca Cappi

*Ein Porträt des Künstlers als Toter*, written and directed by Davide Carnevali © Gianmarco Bresadola

I don't know if this is the case for any of you, but my social life is essentially divided into two parts: the one that is entirely made up of the theatre world, and the other that has absolutely nothing to do with theatre at all. The latter is made up of relatives and old friends. When we see each other we usually talk about politics, football, pandemics, cooking and perhaps even cinema (not always in this order). We usually meet over lunches, dinners, drinks or FC Barcelona matches: but anything social happens far from a theatre, because these people just don't usually go there. That is, unless I invite them personally or gift them a ticket for Christmas. At least even if they don't want the gifts, they can't send them back to Santa Claus... because Santa Claus doesn't exist.

I don't know if this is the case for any of you, but my best friend never comes with me to a company meal after a performance because the conversation tends to pivot around anecdotes about everybody but him. My neighbour, who lives on the floor below me, never complains to me about the floorboards creaking (also because I'm never at home), but complains that when he goes to the theatre he never understands anything. My aunt believes that being a dramaturg means writing dramatic things which make people cry. I think this might be because my grandmother cried a lot when she found out I wanted to devote myself to theatre.



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**My aunt believes  
that being a  
dramaturg  
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people cry.**

I don't know if this is the case for any of you, but when I think about all of this, it is apparent that there is an enormous division between theatre and society. If my social life is divided into two halves which never mix with each other, it's because the theatrical half thinks that the other half is a bit ignorant, a bit materialistic and a bit vulgar. The normal half, though, thinks that the other half lives completely outside reality, complicates everything way too much, and is vaguely elitist. I'm not saying this is true, of course – I'm saying that this is often the way these two halves think of each other.

"I don't know if this is the case for any of you"... looking at this phrase which you've just read, did you not think that I've taken for granted that this article was only going to be read by you – people in the theatre industry? How about everyone else, the vast majority of the population? Those who have absolutely no interest in theatre because they believe that theatre has no interest in them? And how can I convince them otherwise if they don't read this, or if they don't come to the theatre to see what I do?

Ever since starting work at the Emilia Romagna Teatro (ERT) – a national theatre subsidised by public money – I have been principally concerned with just that, namely: my responsibilities towards the audience. What can I, as an artist, do for them? How can I be useful to a society that is paying me out of their own pockets? I have no answers (possibly because I'm not sure there are any), but I can put forward two or three reflections I've been working on over the years.

For a while now at ERT we've been working alongside schools in the region on a project for 15- to 19-year-old pupils. "Classroom Plays" are small-scale plays, performed by two actors directly in schoolrooms, that look (seriously, but with a good dose of humour) at subjects which the students deal with in their everyday school lives. This sort of theatre for young people is not just about the longer-term idea of forming future audiences; these girls and boys are also our audience of today – with the interests, fears and problems of today. It is now that we need to make them understand that theatre can be relevant to their own reality. Take the way we create a story about ourselves on social media (Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok...): the way we design our profiles, the choice of words we use to describe ourselves, the images that portray us – all these things are the basis of dramaturgy.

Because if it is, indeed, true that we are all creators, then the big problem is that we are often barely conscious of that which we are creating or of the tools we are using to create it. So maybe that is what we could do for theatre: provide tools to help us be conscious of the things we do every day. Fine, theatre probably can't solve life's big problems: how to make the person you like like you, FC Barcelona's crises, or working out what love is...; but it could, for example, help you form thoughts on concepts like "image", "crisis", "love". Changing your *forma mentis*, your way of thinking.

So it's not just a question of themes, but of the form in which certain themes are expressed. It is, therefore, a question of language. I'm not talking about word choice: I'm talking about a way of communicating that is fundamental for maintaining the interest of a spectator. It is necessary to find the delicate balance between a language that is mutually comprehensible, and a language that moves you, that amazes you, that opens up a world, that gives you an imaginative shock. The case with young people is striking, but it goes without saying that this isn't just about them. A theatre which wants to be useful at interpreting what is going on outside the theatre cannot speak in a language that is completely divorced from reality.



*Lorca sogna Shakespeare in una notte di mezza estate (Lorca dreams of Shakespeare in a Midsummernight)*, written and directed by Davide Carnevali  
© Francesca Cappi

A language, though, is a bit like love – you can't learn it by reading books alone. You can study grammar at a desk, but to give any sense to what you're saying you have to use it; you have to make mistakes, throw yourself into the dark, even if it is uncomfortable and inconvenient (the same goes for love). This is a huge problem for a society that lives in terror of leaving its comfort zone. The theatrical (and forgive me this term, it's almost as awful as FC Barcelona's game has been the last few months) device is another interesting point. Because, on the one hand, it obliges spectators to abandon the comfort of their seat in the stalls; and, on the other, suggesting that theatre as something other than "classical theatre", often in places that are nicer than theatres, allows us to include those people who don't usually go because they are bored by theatre. And maybe (and I mean maybe. And I'll even add a double question mark ??) interactive, immersive, participative theatre can actually do a good job of really exercising one's own autonomy – which is constantly sold to us as "freedom", even though it's nothing more than sinister individualism. Obviously, the risk is that participation ends up, on the contrary, in an exploitation of spectators, who believe they are being active when the only things they are activating are the usual mechanisms of masked passivity. How can we avoid this? Spectators need not only to be physically active, but also to be constantly aware of what they are doing, and why – and of the meaning of the "why". By being involved, we assume a different attitude: we interact with different bodies, we realise that what we are doing and what we are saying have repercussions on what others say and do. And so we become, in a way, responsible. Naturally, we are also responsible when we sit quietly in the stalls: the actors always feed off the atmosphere the audience creates in the room, and the audience knows it. But it's not just about knowing: to be conscious of our own activity we must live the experience of our own activity. And just as with learning a language, you have to speak it and practice it, we have to literally experience our own limits (it goes without saying that the same goes for love...!).



Ein Porträt des Künstlers als Toter, written and directed by Davide Carnevali © Gianmarco Bresadola

Something similar could explain what is going on with theatre online. Theatre is mostly based on the physical presence of people, and a play that is streaming risks reducing theatre to a flat problem of vision and hearing. So what can we do? Today many people ask themselves if we can allow ourselves to let go of the online theatre, in a time when that would mean giving up a large part of the possible activity for theatres, companies and actors who are already near the end of the line. Perhaps it's not necessary to push actors who are already depressed towards suicide. It's not like digital technology itself is all bad (as nothing in and of itself is... apart from Real Madrid), and it had started being integrated into theatre even before the pandemic. Today it allows us, for example, to access huge numbers of audience members who don't go, wouldn't have gone and probably still won't go to the theatre. It depends, however, on what you do with it. Certainly you're not using it well if the video you broadcast is essentially just an alternative to the live show, whilst showing a far greater effectiveness, efficiency and economy of effort for the audience. It seems to me that it can be used well if it is capable (just as any language should be capable) of making a self-critical gesture towards itself, admitting its own insufficiency with regards to physical presence, and including that in the conversation as precisely that: an absence. If it so desires, theatre online can open up, from a really interesting point of view, a critical discussion on image and its relationship with the non-present body. And, above all, it can bring to life for the spectator the experience of that absence, and all the limits which this awful absence is forcing on theatre. It might seem complicated, but it is really quite simple. It is merely a question of including the reflection of the discussion within the discussion itself. What does that mean? That that which I say should make us think not just about what I say, but also about how I say it. And, above all, about the act itself of saying it.

But the act of saying it is not something we can just talk about: being an act, it needs to be done and lived. And here we find ourselves: if the theatre is indeed unique amongst the arts in that it allows the spectator to have a real experience generated by the meeting and/or clash of words, images and the physical body, then we have enormous potential at our disposal. We can carry the spectator towards an experience that's not just about theatre and its contents, but also – and above all – about its forms of communication and its languages. An experience which takes place in the here and now, but that is also about all the environments and moments in our daily lives, because our own daily lives are full of communication, crises, images, bodies and – I hope for your sake also – love. Theatre can help people live better – but how do we get them to understand that?

Now please don't worry, even though even in 2020 I insist on cheering on FC Barcelona, I'm not a poor, naive, miserable idealist. I know extremely well that changing the perception that society has of theatre is a tremendously complicated process which involves many factors: institutions, the media, production and promotion departments, prices, etc. However, for that small bit that we as creators can do, maybe we can try to recuperate the communication and trust that's been lost between theatre and society, even perhaps by way of those very same factors: speaking a language that is recognisable without insisting it is the only one – which means being inviting without being complacent; calling on the audience to be active without exerting an authoritative power over them while also favouring their experience and, at the same time, the reflection on their experience; underlining that the theatre is all about presence and so desperately needs the presence of people. Above all, it needs the presence of my best friend, my neighbour, my aunt and perhaps even my grandmother... who I have loved with all my heart, and have never yet managed to bring to the theatre. —

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**Today many people ask themselves if we can allow ourselves to let go of the online theatre.**



Photo Davide Carnevali © Pino Montisci

**Davide Carnevali (Milan, Italy, 1981)** Playwright, director and theatre scholar, obtaining a Ph.D. in Theatre Theory at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, with a period of studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. He is currently resident artist at ERT Emilia Romagna National Theatre and member of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya's Dramaturgy Committee. He's professor for the École des maîtres edition 2020/2021. He wrote, among others: *Variazioni sul modello di Kraepelin* (awarded by Theatertreffen Stückemarkt Berlin 2009; Prize Marisa Fabbri 2009; Prize de les Journées de Lyon 2012), *Ritratto di donna araba che guarda il mare* (Prize Riccione 2013), *Sweet Home Europa* and *Menelao*. Recently he has written and staged: *Ein Porträt des Künstlers als Toter* (Münchener Biennale and Staatsoper Unter den Linden, 2018) and *Lorca sogna Shakespeare in una notte di mezza estate* (ERT, 2019). In 2018 he received the Prize "Hystrio for dramaturgy" for his artistic activity. His plays have been presented in various international seasons and festivals and have been translated into Catalan, Chinese, English, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian and Spanish. Editions of his plays are available by Einaudi in Italy and Actes Sud in French, among others.

# Everything at Once



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**Ulrich Khuon, Artistic Director of Deutsches Theater Berlin, in conversation with journalist Sonja Zekri**

**Sonja Zekri:** *The last DT premiere preceding the lockdown was, ironically, Boccaccio's Decameron, which was staged as a German-Russian coproduction by Kirill Serebrennikov. Did you have an inkling at the time that that would be the end?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** We had been planning the project for years. But that night it became painfully obvious that we would stop performing. So we completely put on the brakes, from one day to the next. There were another two performances of Decameron, and then I sent home 280 employees out of a staff of 300. I came to work every day and sat at my desk in the abandoned theatre, where I organised Zoom conferences and talked to people who I wouldn't see in person for weeks.

**Sonja Zekri:** *How depressing.*

**Ulrich Khuon:** It was a standstill that conjured an almost philosophical mood; I drove here through empty streets and felt a state of abandonment that evokes the world of cinema or theatre.

**Sonja Zekri:** *The theatre often examines catastrophe, loneliness, and exceptional circumstances. Do you think this renders theatremakers better prepared to cope with this kind of situation?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** That's a misconception that I had as well. We in the theatre world could of course claim a monopoly on suffering—after all, there are no plays that focus from start to finish on well-being; instead, theatre could be considered a kind of anti-wellness programme. With one notable difference: in the theatre, the audience experiences these crises and the consequences thereof as an observer. As artists, we are well-equipped to describe suffering, the avoidance of pain and overcoming disaster. However, when we experience a crisis ourselves, we are no better equipped to handle it than anyone else.

**Sonja Zekri:** *You don't believe that the theatre can make people more resilient?*

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**When we experience a crisis ourselves, we are no better equipped to handle it than anyone else.**



**Ulrich Khuon:** I don't. During a crisis, you need to accept that things are out of your control. In the theatre, life is a permanent struggle to maintain order, while at the same time you feel a permanent dependence on others, whereby the slightest thing can destroy everything. And that's a great thing about theatre—but in everyday life we tend to forget about this dependence.

**Sonja Zekri:** *What can theatre provide us during a real crisis?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** The philosopher Odo Marquard and the sociologist Dirk Baecker have written that we always need to have more solutions than problems at the ready. It is only human to lack a specific solution for a problem, which is why it's more important to overcome problems with solutions. Theatre is a discursive medium, which explores gaps, creates alternative spaces and only obliquely approaches its actual subject. In the case of Corona, taking a direct approach is a matter for policy and science, or, in the case of climate, a matter for climate protests. It is our task to identify problems and test out variations of possible solutions.

**Sonja Zekri:** *For weeks it seemed that there wasn't much demand for this kind of talent. Hardware stores re-opened before there was even a concept for the theatres ...*

**Ulrich Khuon:** Hardware stores, football, golf courses—everyone left us behind. Whoever screamed the loudest got what they wanted. While it is true that theatre is particularly susceptible from a virological point-of-view, it is also a quiet medium. After four weeks, however, I gave an interview to the radio station Deutschlandfunk in my capacity as president of the German Theatre and Orchestra Association, and I certainly didn't mince words: I expressed my shock at the situation and received a lot of feedback afterwards, including from policymakers. The German president called me. I told him that we need a voice to represent us. Then, at the first concert performed by the Berlin Philharmonic, he described culture as 'nourishment', a basic essential of life. From that point on, you could see that a new consensus was forming on the issue.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Nowadays politicians in Germany are praising culture to the heavens. Does it bother you that they belatedly paid lip service to culture?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** I was confident that we would be deeply missed. In the past there were of course consolidations and closings—Berlin's Schiller Theatre offers a possible taste of what's to come, for example—but when you consider the overall health of the theatre world then you can count these negative examples on one hand. I am not easily shaken when it comes to theatre; we enjoy enormous solidarity when we need it. Even cities with a population of 20,000 or 30,000 can support a local theatre. This time around, we also received many letters supporting our cause. I admit there was a vacuum at the beginning, but it was one that allowed us to see what was missing. That's why I didn't feel particularly hurt by the belated realisation on the part of policymakers, as I expected it would come in the end.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Like many other theatres, DT brought a few of its works to the internet. Was this a gratifying experience or more of a stop-gap measure?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** This was the appropriate way for us to reach out. A few theatres fear the digital, but that's completely unnecessary. Theatre has always explored new media, from silent films and later to cinema, television and the internet. It has a duty to do as well. Just as we are part of a culture, we are also part of a digital culture, one that is changing the rhythms of life and communication.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Don't you worry that the digital will replace the theatre or render it useless?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** On the internet site of Junges DT you can see the line 'Live AND digital' with a flashing 'AND'. We should be much more confident: after all, everyone has a television nowadays. When the television was still new, people thought that no one would go to the theatre anymore. And yet they continue to go to the theatre, football games and restaurants. If you watch a performance online, you don't watch in one sitting; instead, you can go out, grab a beer. The viewer is not as invested. It doesn't work like that in the theatre: we go to experience the performance with others. For a moment, the viewer is immersed, freed from multitasking, and completely in the moment.

**Sonja Zekri:** *You moved the entire festival RADAR OST online.*

**Ulrich Khuon:** I did. We were convinced that we would have to go all in if the digital performances were to be more than just a Band-Aid solution. So we streamed stagings by Kirill Serebrennikov, Ewelina Marciniak and Timofej Kuljabin, all of which had never been performed in Germany. There were also new stagings, which granted viewers virtual access to DT, to places like the main stage, the wardrobe department—everywhere you looked there were new digital formats, such as post-performance discussions and lecture performances.

**Sonja Zekri:** *The season will kick off with Corona regulations. Some of the rules mandate that performers maintain a distance of 1.5 meters, and even 6 meters when they perform at louder volumes. Is it even possible to perform under these conditions?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** The Swiss Theatre and Orchestra Association published an entire book with regulations, while we have a short list. You can reduce everything to a few main principles: the main concern is practicing social distancing and maintaining good hygiene. The rules are easy to understand but also strict, such as the need to maintain a distance of 1.5 meters at all times.

**Sonja Zekri:** *The season begins with 'Melissa gets everything' ('Melissa kriegt alles') by René Pollesch. How does he feel about the new rules?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** René Pollesch needed to stop rehearsals for 'Number Four' in March, which was a big disappointment for both of us. Rehearsals resumed in June—the premiere of 'Melissa gets everything' ('Melissa kriegt alles') took place on 29 August—and obviously everything is much more complicated now. The theatre's own safety commission analysed potential hazards. Pollesch arrived at the theatre with his very own thermometer because he wanted to adhere to all regulations, lest work needed to be put on hold again. Pollesch's work can be seen as a cascading discourse, one that flows around its subject, accumulating new layers with every revolution. That's why he was able to continue working and it wasn't a death blow to the work.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Peter Handke's Zdeněk Adamec will premiere in Salzburg and then be staged by Jossi Wieler for DT. Why this work?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** I have read plays for years, and yet it took time to grasp how great the text is. Zdeněk Adamec was a young man in the Czech Republic who died from self-immolation in 2003 on Prague's Wenceslas Square. He has since been forgotten. Handke's piece feels its way around the subject; it could go this way or that. It portrays a group of people who explore this forgotten figure in a series of polyphonic discourses. I find Handke's approach—the way he opens up new realms, even though

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*I was confident  
that we would be  
deeply missed.*

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**Corona has taught us one thing: everyone can decide whether they have the desire to learn.**

the viewer cannot determine the location—to be the perfect antidote to society's grim fixation on spoken promises.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Handke has a talent for pinning things down ...*

**Ulrich Khuon:** ... but he also masters the smallest gestures. This work depicts a victim of suicide who has not been treated kindly by history. A misery that has long been overlooked, and for which he crafts a suitable language.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Your theatre will premiere ten new works by the end of December. Is that less than usual?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** We had already been planning to do less this season than in previous years. We had to postpone a few premieres from the spring season to the autumn season. We will perform 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof' by Tennessee Williams, directed by Jette Steckel, and Timofej Kuljabin's 'Fräulein Julie' after Strindberg (assuming we can find a solution for social distancing). Anne Lenk will stage 'Maria Stuart' using a display case as the set. That fits 'Maria Stuart' well, as it is a tragedy about loneliness. Since the work has a stunning dramatic arc, it is not merely a fantasy. I am especially curious to see how the climactic confrontation between Elisabeth and Maria plays out, and how the performers maintain distance from each other.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Do all of these rules make theatremakers and actors more creative? As a kind of Corona-influenced dogma?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** I definitely wouldn't say that I embrace the new limitations, but we do consider the overall inclinations of the various directors. When we can't find a suitable solution, then we try to separate the performers into pods, just like in sports, who are then regularly tested.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Isolation or, conversely, forced time together have been the dominant issues of the past few months. Does the current repertoire reflect these situations?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** Hell is other people, as Sartre said, but time with other people can also be the solution. In September, Sophie Rois, Manuel Harder and Ulrich Matthes will give a scenic reading of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's comedy 'Play Strindberg', which could be considered a kind of quarantine for couples.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Sebastian Hartmann will stage Thomas Mann's 'Magic Mountain' ('Zauberberg'): even more loneliness, this time in the fresh Alpine air.*

**Ulrich Khuon:** Definitely. Hartmann doesn't treat the dissolution of time on the magic mountain merely as a re-telling, but rather as a philosophical cacophony offering an array of interacting voices. He will likely focus on themes explored by Mann, of a society removed from the excesses dominating before the First World War. A physical standstill while at the same time change is afoot just beyond the gate.

**Sonja Zekri:** *Amir Reza Koohestani wants to stage 'Woyzeck Interrupted'. How likely is it that he will be able to leave Iran?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** We will have to wait and see. He plans to set the piece in a time that connects to the present day. We want the play to be performed in December, which means that rehearsals would need to begin in autumn. We hope that it will work out.

**Sonja Zekri:** *The festival Autorentheatretage was also scheduled for June, but will now be presented in October.*

**Ulrich Khuon:** We commissioned ten short plays, partially with the intent of telling authors: you are sorely needed in these difficult times. We will also belatedly host the Lange Nacht der Autor\_innen, which is to feature three premieres from Graz, Leipzig and from our own theatre. Our contribution is 'Hitler's Goat and the King's Haemorrhoids' ('Hitlers Ziege und die Hämorrhoiden des Königs') by Rosa von Praunheim. This is a grotesque work about the political party AfD, Hitler and being gay. It will later become part of our repertoire.

**Sonja Zekri:** *This season's slogan is 'Everything at once'. A Corona motto?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** Yes, but not only. There are several social movements that raise this question as people protest climate change, racism and gender-based discrimination. The notion that change will come eventually in a democratic nation no longer suffices. I can definitely see this, especially regarding gender. When I started as a theatre director 30 years ago, there was just one female theatre director in all of Germany. Now 22 per cent are women—but that's after 30 years. For a while I was appeased and believed that change had arrived, but now I believe that 22 per cent is just 22 per cent, and not 40 or 50. And that is too little progress for 30 years. This is not an easy problem to solve, however. The fate of the values-based code of conduct for theatres, which I helped negotiate as part of my work for the German Theatre and Orchestra Association, was shrouded with uncertainty up until the last-minute. This is about power, of course. And, sadly, it's an issue that is not over yet. 'Everything at once' is a demand—one that is abrupt, outrageous, helpful or even dangerous.

**Sonja Zekri:** *'Everything at once': More utopia as a threat?*

**Ulrich Khuon:** Some may warn that 'Everything at once' is a danger to democracy, because this system of government requires the slow negotiations of compromise. But if we look at the gap between rich and poor, we can see that the gap is growing out of control. For this issue, we can't just wait around until it is fixed in a capitalistic system. People can adapt but changing habits doesn't come easily. This applies to actors and other theatre professionals, just as for other people. Corona has taught us one thing: everyone can decide whether they have the desire to learn. —



**Sonja Zekri**, born in Dortmund, works as an editor for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. She was the CIS-correspondent in Moscow and Middle East correspondent in Cairo, before becoming head of the cultural section of the SZ. Beginning in October 2020 she will be the cultural correspondent for the SZ, based in Berlin.



**Ulrich Khuon** studied law and completed his studies in theology and German language and literature, which he completed with the state examination. He came to the theatre through his work as a theatre and literary critic, writing for the *Badische Zeitung* in Freiburg from 1977 to 1980. In 1980, he received his first engagement as chief dramatic advisor at the Stadttheater Konstanz, before he took over as director of the theatre from 1988 to 1993. Khuon was later artistic director of the Schauspielhaus Hannover from 1993 to 2000, and succeeded Jürgen Flimm at Hamburg's Thalia Theater in the 2000/01 season. He became director of Deutsches Theater Berlin during the 2009/2010 season.

# ENGAGE

## The International Programme for European Theatres



*Democrisis* at Theater Magdeburg/Germany for Young Europe III  
© Andreas Lander

As ETC starts its 4th year of ENGAGE, the international programme for European theatres, let's take a look at the facts and figures from last season.

The 2019/2020 season in numbers:

8

ETC Young Europe co-productions premiered in 5 countries

2

casebooks published with 26 contributions by 29 authors from 12 European countries

3

online Coffee Breaks connecting 41 theatre-makers

52

theatre makers from 20 countries, directly supported through our professional development programme

2.4k

people online in ETC's livestream programme in June 2020

86

theatre professionals gathered in Amsterdam for the ETC International Theatre Conference

14

emerging theatre-makers from 13 countries joined the European Theatre Academy

7

emerging directors and dramaturgs supported by the Artist Residency Programme 2020

# Artistic Theatre Collaborations

At its heart, ETC focuses on international artistic collaboration and creation with innovative programming and new formats – enabling critical thinking through theatre.

## Young Europe III

The festival will showcase the Young Europe III productions in classrooms and theatre venues, with a supporting programme that includes workshops, masterclasses and discussions on new drama for young audiences.



• Young Europe Festival  
"No[t] Tomorrow",  
Graz/Austria, 8–10 June 2021



Laura Eichten and Nazim Dario Neumann in *Rage* at Deutsches Theater Berlin for Young Europe III  
© Arno Declair

## ENGAGE Festival: New Drama

At the ENGAGE Festival, which takes place in Graz during the ETC International Theatre Conference in June 2021, ETC will focus on new European drama and the circulation of contemporary texts. There will be stage readings of European texts in their English translation; translation grants into further European languages will be awarded.



• Graz/Austria,  
10–13 June 2021

## Theatre in the Digital Age

ETC provides support for experimental digital projects by its member theatres and fosters international digital community-building and outreach through the live streaming of performances and conferences throughout the season.



ETC Digital Theatre Workshop in Liège, 2019  
© ETC



• For ETC Member Theatres only  
• Project development, livestreams and grants throughout the season

Grants Available!

# International Professional Development

ETC develops a European professional network to increase the exchange of best practice, to promote chances to meet and share, and to stimulate European theatre production.

## Staff Exchange Programme

An opportunity for the staff of ETC Member Theatres to exchange know-how and best practices with European colleagues and work at another European theatre for up to 30 days.



- For ETC Member Theatres only
- Takes place between September 2020 and August 2021

Grants Available!

## Performance Exchange Programme

ETC offers travel grants to support artistic exchanges and guest performances between ETC Member theatres, and communicates about the performances touring as part of this programme.



- For ETC Member Theatres only
- Takes place between September 2020 and August 2021

Grants Available!



*Dog House. View from above. View from below..*  
performance exchange 2017  
© DAKH Theatre

## ETC Annual International Conferences

Two conferences every season for theatre professionals from the ETC network as well as invited guests to promote networking and awareness of current debates and challenges in European theatre. This season themes are Sustainability & Green Theatre, New Forms of Theatre Writing & Dramaturgy.



- For ETC Member Theatres and invited guests
- 25–27 November 2020, online: “Designing the New Decade”
- 10–13 June 2021, Graz/Austria: “New Writings”



© Ylva Fyllingsnes

## European Theatre Academy

Four days of masterclasses, workshops and mentoring by leading European theatre professionals during the Festival d'Avignon in France for emerging theatre makers (from public theatre institutions and the independent performing arts sector) looking to acquire know-how and skills to internationalise and professionalise their work.



- Open for both ETC Member Theatres and non-members
- Takes place in July 2021
- Call for applications March 2021



ETC European Theatre Academy in Avignon, 2019  
© ETC

## ETC Coffee Breaks

Monthly online networking meetings for ETC Members to share their challenges with each other and jointly develop future projects.



- For ETC Member Theatres only
- Takes place online every month



© Sebastian Hoppe

## ETC's Annual Professional Development Programme

In-person workshops and monthly webinars focussing on relevant topics such as diversity within theatres, digital capacity-building, adapting to online working, green theatre and green communications.



- For ETC Member Theatres only
- Workshops, webinars & seminars throughout the season



© Peter Chvostek

## ETC Artist Residency Programme

This year's programme is dedicated to emerging Hungarian artists, selected to join the creative process in seven ETC Member Theatres for a 6- to 8-week residency and gain insights into new working methods, receive input for their own work and expand their European networks.



- Open to ETC Member Theatres and independent artists
- Takes place between January and June 2021
- Call for applications October 2020

Grants Available!

## Advocacy

ETC voices the needs and concerns of the theatre community to political leaders and promotes the visibility of the sector from local to international level.

### ETC Roadshow: Promotion for ETC Members and their Theatre Productions

Travel grants to join large-scale events in the performing arts sector, visit other ETC member theatres or future international partners. Subtitling grants for promotional and scouting videos.



- For ETC Member Theatres only
- Takes place between September 2020 and August 2021
- Travel grants and subtitling grants available

Grants Available!

## European Theatre Forum 2020: European Performing Arts in Focus

Dresden/Germany & online,  
11–13 November 2020

The European Theatre Forum is organised in the frame of the German EU Council Presidency and in cooperation with the German Minister of State for Culture and the Media and the European Commission. The European Theatre Convention has advocated for the establishment of a European Theatre Forum for the past three years and is proud to receive recognition for its efforts.

It offers, for the first time, European-level representation for the theatre and performing arts, both within and outside Europe, and establishes a creative dialogue process within the sector and with policymakers through partnership and international collaboration. The aim of the European Theatre Forum is to make visible and promote the outstanding importance of theatre in Europe, with its diversity of forms and languages, both as an art form and an important public space for cultural-political dialogue, and to strategically strengthen the structurally-fragmented theatre sector and to address the issues and implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for European theatre and performing arts.

European and international networks of theatre and performing arts have come together to collaborate towards a shared goal of establishing a creative dialogue process

within the sector and with policymakers and jointly curate an ambitious programme. Topics to be discussed over the three days include international collaboration, working conditions, environmental sustainability in the sector, accessibility and diversity, and European theatre as a public space.

Through a specially developed online platform, selected guests will be transported together to the host city of Dresden and will be able to meet, discuss, exchange and network as well as enjoy performances and installations from the “Fast Forward – European Festival for Young Stage Directors”.

Sections of the programme will also be available to all via live stream on the European Theatre Forum website at [www.europeantheatreforum.eu](http://www.europeantheatreforum.eu)

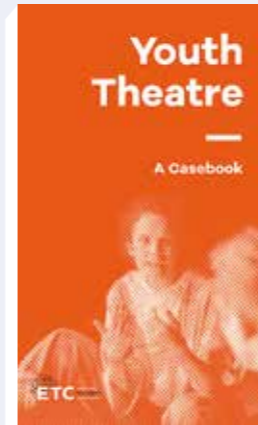
*The “European Theatre Forum 2020: European Performing Arts in Focus” is coordinated by the European Theatre Convention.*

## ETC Publications

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The European Theatre Convention started a series of publications for the creative community of theatre professionals. The ETC Casebooks all present reflections and best-practice examples to make theatre today, reaching wider audiences. Each casebook focuses on one main topic. One new casebook will be published this season too!

Read them online or request an exemplar at [convention@europeantheatre.eu](mailto:convention@europeantheatre.eu)



Published 2020

### Youth Theatre – A Casebook

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Young people's stories, hopes and doubts shape the future. They are tomorrow's audiences. How can we raise up their voice in society and on the European theatre stages? What topics matter to the young generation across Europe and what new texts and forms of theatre can be developed to be relevant to their world?



Published 2020

### Participatory Theatre – A Casebook

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Bürgerbühne, Community Theatre, Teatro do Oprimido, Social Drama... The practice and idea of turning citizens, users and audiences into active participants is on the rise in numerous fields of society and many theatres feel the urge to link art to new and more democratic forms of communication and community involvement.



Published 2018

### Digital Theatre – A Casebook

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The digital shift changes how we create, share and monetise content, including theatrical works. European theatre increases civic engagement by bringing theatre to new audiences and sectors. New developments in digital theatre and technologies can break down barriers, encourage dialogue and help Europe's rich cultural tradition thrive.



# ETC Calendar 2020/2021

October 2020

**Artist Residency Programme:  
Application for Hungarian Artists Opens**

🌐 [europeantheatre.eu](http://europeantheatre.eu)

14 October 2020

**ETC Coffee Break #5**

🌐 Online

11–13 November 2020

**European Theatre Forum 2020:  
Performing Arts in Focus**

🌐 Online

25–27 November 2020

**ETC International Theatre Conference**

🌐 Online

27 November 2020

**ETC Coffee Break #6**

🌐 Online

December 2020

**Green Theatre & Green Communication  
Workshops**

🌐 Online

15 December 2020

**ETC Coffee Break #7**

🌐 Online

January – June 2021

**Artist Residency Placements**

📄 ETC Member Theatres

14 January 2021

**ETC Coffee Break #8**

🌐 Online

11 February 2021

**ETC Coffee Break #9**

🌐 Online

March 2020

**European Theatre Academy:  
Application Opens**

🌐 [europeantheatre.eu](http://europeantheatre.eu)

11 March 2021

**ETC Coffee Break #10**

🌐 Online

15 April 2021

**ETC Coffee Break #11**

🌐 Online

12 May 2021

**ETC Coffee Break #12**

🌐 Online

08–10 June 2021

**Young Europe Festival**

📄 Schauspiel Graz / Austria

10–13 June 2021

**ETC International Theatre Conference  
ENGAGE Festival**

📄 Schauspiel Graz/Austria

July 2021

**European Theatre Academy**

📄 Festival d'Avignon/France

Watch out for a new ETC webinar series,  
workshops and seminars - more info on our website!

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



*Catarina e a beleza de matar fascistas [Catarina and the beauty of killing fascists]*  
by Tiago Rodrigues, 2020  
© Pedro Macedo, Framed Photos

# About ETC

## An artistic platform for creation, innovation and collaboration

As the largest network of public theatres in Europe, ETC reflects the diversity of Europe's vibrant cultural sector.

Founded in 1988, ETC promotes European theatre as a vital social platform for dialogue, democracy and interaction that responds to, reflects and engages with today's diverse audiences and changing societies.

ETC fosters an inclusive notion of theatre that brings Europe's social, linguistic and cultural heritage to audiences and communities in Europe and beyond. Powerful and professional ETC governance ensures that the network will thrive and grow, taking into consideration the latest trends and developments.

### ETC's current four-year programme

"ENGAGE: Empowering today's audience through challenging theatre" offers our Member Theatres many opportunities. This comprehensive, ground-breaking programme is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

### Your Benefits as an ETC Member

- **Meet and network with colleagues** from other European theatres
- **Create** international artistic collaborations
- **Get inspired** by new ideas and share best practice
- **Be represented** at European and international levels
- **Explore new contexts**, cities and perspectives



ETC International Theatre Conference in Amsterdam, 2019  
©Bart Grietens

## Get in Touch!

Interested theatres are invited to join our ETC International Theatre Conferences to get to know the network, the members and future cooperation partners. New members' applications are voted on at each General Assembly.

If you are interested, please don't hesitate to contact the ETC team for further information.

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



# ETC Partners

ETC projects are jointly financed by its members.

The ETC programme “ENGAGE – Empowering today’s audience through challenging theatre” is co-funded by the **Creative Europe Programme of the European Union**.

The “European Theatre Forum 2020: European Performing Arts in Focus” is funded by the **German Minister of State for Culture and Media** in the frame of the **German EU Council Presidency**, the **European Commission** and **European Theatre Convention**.



## Cooperation Partners



## Media Partner



# ETC Contact

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[europeantheatre.eu](http://europeantheatre.eu)

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