

# Youth Theatre



A Casebook

# **YOUTH THEATRE**

A Casebook

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## FOREWORD

# European Youth Theatre Today

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BY

**HEIDI WILEY & SERGE RANGONI**

**It's now June 2020.** In most European countries, the first wave of Covid-19 has started to slow down, and every week politicians announce which parts of society are to resume next. Theatre has finally also made it into the news.

Making theatre with and for young people has always been one of our major goals, including before the pandemic. We strive to reach and empower youth through the art of theatre, and direct the spotlight on the critical and diverse voices of our future generation. We started our project Young Europe twelve years ago. Currently in its third iteration, we used performative research and a European collaboration to create nine new theatre productions for young people depicting their reality. How can we artistically transform their emotions to make theatre relevant for Europe's youth? What interests the tech-savvy young people of the xyz generation in Europe who grew up with technology? What about issues such as rage from feeling excluded from society, fear of the future, climate change and family conventions impeding a self-determined life? Where can they find inspiration at a time when freedom of expression and thoughts are being challenged by fake news? Our collaborative paths were manifold, selected and shared in this casebook: read about the youth council in Deutsches Theater Berlin who has a say on artistic choices, explore the most direct stage experience in classroom-plays and immersive game-plays or the creative process developed in Bratislava, in which the play's language is based solely on research with young people to speak with each other on an equal level.

Before the pandemic, we planned the Young Europe III Festival for June 2020 in Graz. Sadly, the festival had to be cancelled, though we hope it can take place next year after the pandemic. What there remains, with and without the pandemic,

is the utter need to give young people a voice to shape our future, and not just on the stage. We would like to thank the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union and the Allianz Cultural Foundation for supporting our research and creative work with and for young people and ensuring its accessibility.

**Serge Rangoni**  
*President*

**Heidi Wiley**  
*Executive Director*



*Strange Things* (Bratislava/Slovakia)  
© Slovak National Drama

# The Project: Young Europe

## III



5 Countries – 9 Theatres – 3 Artistic  
Research Teams – 7 New Plays –  
9 Productions – 1 Festival – 1 Casebook

The European Theatre Convention's artistic collaboration project Young Europe III focuses on theatre as a place of identification for young people in Europe. Over two years, nine ETC Member Theatres collaborated in groups of three to develop new theatre texts and productions on the topics of rage, democracy, identity and future scenarios.

From in-depth research with teenagers from Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovakia, the artistic teams identified major themes for new plays to expand European multilingual drama for young audiences.

Nine different productions have been created and premiered throughout the theatre season 2019-2020 across Europe. These add to the ever-growing European repertoire of contemporary plays for young people, in the frame of the Young Europe initiative since 2008.



## Rage

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Deutsches Theater  
(Berlin/Germany)

*Written and directed by  
Wilke Weermann*

**Recommended for age 13+**

What does democracy mean for people who are not allowed to vote? Who listens when you are not of age? What forms of participation do we need? And what if Fridays for Future is just the beginning? Author and director Wilke Weermann has spoken to Berlin students who are fighting for their future. From the research material and interviews, a classroom piece was created about the political attitude of young people to life.

*Images: Laura Eichten and Nazim Dario Neumann in  
Rage (Berlin/Germany) © Arno Declair*

## Fury Island [Haragossziget]

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Weöres Sándor Színház  
(Szombathely/Hungary)

*Written by Attila Lőrinczy,  
directed by Attila Réthly*

**Recommended for age 14+**

In Hungary in the 2000s there was an astonishing number of murders committed by young people. After a thorough investigation of these cases, we created a fictional documentary story in which we deliberately avoided obvious motives

such as poverty, drug addiction or severe psychiatric stress.

We were curious to see how seemingly consolidated, wealthy young people—much like those in ancient Greek tragedies—could commit the most serious crime: matricide. In our production, the circumstances and motives of the story reveal themselves in the overlapping of the narratives of the sixteen-year-old high school girl Stuci, her nineteen-year-old friend Zsomer, and the monologues of her mother Erika, a fifty-four-year-old librarian.

*Images: Judit Németh, Boglárka Nagy-Bakonyi and Csaba Kenderes  
in Fury Island (Szombathely/Hungary) © Zsolt Mészáros*



## Age Of Rage

**De Toneelmakerij**  
(Amsterdam/Netherlands)

*Written by Jibbe Willems,  
directed by Wieke ten Cate*

**Recommended for age 14+**

She's 16 and she's smart. She's smarter than her parents and smarter than most other people, too. She thinks about things, and life, and stuff like that. She's going to say it like it is because she's scared her future's about to explode. She didn't even do much wrong,

really, she reckons. All she did was throw a pie in a politician's face. But then they pinned her down on the ground and locked her up. It's only making her more angry, and she's already got enough reasons to be angry: her parents have been divorcing, she's debt-relief poor, and every time she tries to form an opinion, she's cut down again by her psychologists, teachers or classmates.

*Age of Rage* is about a combative girl who's trying all she can to move forward, but keeps on getting dragged down. She wants to be heard, but nobody's listening.

*Images: Frieda Barnhard and Chiem Vreeken in  
Age of Rage (Amsterdam/Netherlands) © Sanne Peper*



## Plan(et) B

**Badisches Staatstheater**  
(Karlsruhe/Germany)

*Written by Stefan Hornbach,  
directed by Djuna Delker*

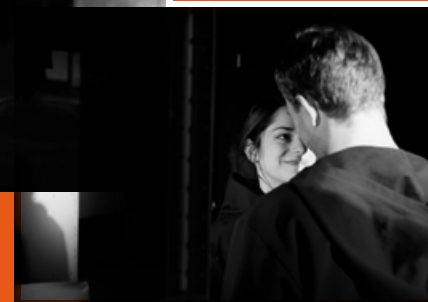
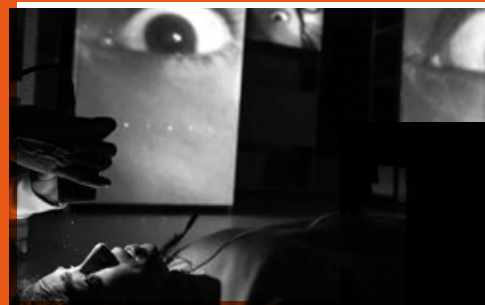
**Recommended for age 12+**

The Fridays for Future movement and many renowned scientists agree that if our planet was a boat, it would soon sink. It's time for a new generation to take the helm. There is no planet B to which we can turn. But there could be a plan B...

Stefan Hornbach, who writes the text for the German side of this three-country co-production was awarded the Osnabrück Dramatist Prize for his first classroom play *Schwalbenkönig* at the Junges Staatstheater Karlsruhe.

*Images: Alisa Kunina and Pål Fredrik Kvale in  
Plan(et) B (Karlsruhe/Germany) © Arno Kohlem*





## Before Tomorrow [Holnapelőtt]

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Pesti Magyar Színház  
(Budapest/Hungary)

*Written by Péter Deres, János  
Horváth, directed by Illés Horváth*

**Recommended for age 14+**

How do young people see how they can equip their lives in a world where there are no adults—perhaps because of an apocalyptic disaster? How can they communicate with each other, survive when there is no parental control over them?

*Images: Gergely Csiby, Panka Kovács and Antos Gémes in  
Before Tomorrow (Budapest/Hungary) © Éva Juhász*

## Strange Things [Cudzô]

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Slovak National Drama Theatre  
(Bratislava/Slovakia)

*Written by Alexandra Salmela,  
directed by Júlia Rázusová*

**Recommended for age 11+**

A play for youth by a Slovak author, about what we do and don't find strange. A story about the journey of young male and female characters with all challenges, anxieties, fears, indecisiveness, and adrenaline that make up an adventurous quest

for the rescue of the world and, possibly, the net as well. *Strange Things* portrays a world after a catastrophe when only one thing is clear: all adults have disappeared. Sources no longer work, and it seems that the internet is about to stop working, too. How can the young people manage in this new context and what world will they create? Where will they look for their families and friends? How will they save the net? *Strange Things* is a witty encounter with what we find alien and what we (like to) fear.

*Images: Monika Potokárová and Braňo Mosný  
in Strange Things (Bratislava/Slovakia) © Róbert Tappert*



# Democrisis

Written by Jules Buchholz,  
Gamedesign by Mathias Prinz

Recommended for ages 14+

A right-wing populist party is the third strongest force in the German Bundestag, the British want to leave the EU, neo-Nazi demonstrations are taking place in East Germany, a confused president wants to build a wall: What's going on? A clearly noticeable jolt towards nationalism is currently shaking our basic democratic order. Alternative facts

and hardened fronts make the necessary dialogue impossible—are we endangering our democracy? A live theatre game developed in co-operation between Theater Magdeburg, Staatstheater Braunschweig and the “Marin Sorescu” National Theatre of Craiova. The immersive gameplay *Democrisis* is based on interviews with 14 to 20-year-old people from Braunschweig, Magdeburg and Craiova and asks the question: What would we lose if we put our democracy at risk?

*Image Left:* Anja Signitzer and Isabel Will in *Democrisis* (Magdeburg/Germany); *Image Right:* Audience at gameplay *Democrisis* (Magdeburg/Germany) © Andreas Lander



Anja Signitzer in *Democrisis* (Magdeburg/Germany)  
© Andreas Lander

# New European Drama Repertory for Young People

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What occupies the mind of the young generation today? This was a core question for the development of a new European drama repertory for young people in the frame of Young Europe III. Under the shared theme 'Age of Rage', two directors shed light on different sources of anger from young people's perspectives: Wieke ten Cate broaches the issue of uprising right-wing populism in the Dutch youth, while Attila Réthly explores rage within the context of the family. In *Before Tomorrow*, János Horváth developed a theatre text which aims to guide young people to change their future through autonomous decision making.

# Age of Rage

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BY  
WIEKE TEN CATE

As a documentary theatre maker, I am typically interested in individuals and characters whom I cannot directly identify with, especially when it comes to their world view, life choices and circumstances. Getting to know 'the other' makes the world easier to understand for me, and often safer, despite the fact that the subjects I am concerned with also evoke resistance, both from myself and my environment.

'The other' in my production *Age of Rage* is embodied by a sixteen-year-old girl who develops right-wing radical views while she becomes increasingly rebellious against everything and everyone. The girl is furious about her subordinated position as a poor, white Dutch girl. She thinks that her wealthy classmates are handed opportunities on a silver platter, and that the 'New Dutch' (immigrants) are shown goodwill that she and her family could only dream of. This rebellion results in the girl getting arrested after she throws her birthday cake in the face of a black, left-wing politician during a live broadcast. The people surrounding the girl wonder whether this incident stems from radical violence or should be considered a juvenile cry for attention. The question is: Just how dangerous is this girl?

Finding an explanation for the emerging nationalism in the Netherlands was the starting point of my research for *Age of Rage*. Forum voor Democratie, a Dutch right-wing populist political party, has expanded over the past few years and now has the most members. It is also the second largest youth party. I feel concerned about the rise of right-wing extremism and its nostalgic sentiment towards the 1950s and the ideal of a white nation state consisting of male workers and housewives. Returning to the society of the 1950s would be a clear degradation in my opinion; however, when I conducted interviews

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.... when you have the feeling that no one cares about you and you have difficulty making ends meet, you vote for the person who promises you an extra twenty euros every month.

in preparation for *Age of Rage*, I spoke with many well-mannered, highly educated right-wing adolescents who would disagree with me.

At the same time, I am continually amazed by how my own left-wing milieu sometimes reacts to political events. Every time a right-wing politician wins an election, my timeline is crawling with messages like: ‘How can

such a madman find widespread support in our society?’, ‘I woke up to another world!’ and ‘Is the Netherlands now mainly populated by angry farmers who are blind to urban prosperity?’ When reading these messages, I think about the young French writer Édouard Louis, who in his book *Who Killed My Father* attempts to explain why his father votes for Marine Le Pen, a figure who represents everything that Louis stands against. Louis writes that when you see the world as a place full of opportunity, politics is a way to present yourself as someone who, for example, cares about the environment or about open borders in Europe. However, when you have the feeling that no one cares about you and you have difficulty making ends meet, you vote for the person who promises you an extra twenty euros every month.

Right-wing characters are extremely rare in Dutch theatre. A possible explanation for this is that most people working in

the arts are left-wing with inclusive world views. While I count myself amongst this group, my interest in polarisation drove me to delve into a perspective I don’t share. We see increasing divides between the rich and poor, the highly educated and the less educated, black and white, and young and old. The conviction that we cannot understand each other is fast gaining ground both on the right (as xenophobia) and on the left (as identity politics). This phenomenon motivated me to start writing *Age of Rage*.

My idea was criticised even during the research phase. Over Easter I asked my cousin—who is high up in the left-wing green party GroenLinks—if he could set up a meeting for me with one of his colleagues from a right-wing party. That very night, my aunt emailed me to warn about Forum voor Democratie, arguing that they are resentful, the party chairman Thierry Baudet is evil and that the party only spreads lies. I responded that I am aware of the practices of the party, but that a lot of people do sympathise with their views and that I wanted to investigate their motivations. Afterwards, I heard the criticism that was often voiced during the later stages of my research: namely, that I shouldn’t offer a platform to far right ideologies—not even with a critical approach, and especially not when the point-of-view is embodied by a character who is funny, smart and female.

Nowadays, our world remains complex for many people, as we are confronted with floods of refugees, a climate crisis, a knowledge-based economy, the disappearance of manual labor, and a welfare state with structural flaws. All of this leads to stress and fear about the future. When a person feels lost or that their future does not belong to them, this can lead to a very destructive form of rage—even more powerful than the fury

felt when you lack a space of your own, for example the space that women and second- and third-generation Moroccan-Dutch fight for. This first form of rage is often directed towards the 'newcomers'. In my research, a lot of young people with far-right nationalist beliefs mentioned this feeling of loss and losing something. As a theatre maker, I want to take this feeling seriously and call attention to it.

At post-performance discussions of *Age of Rage*, it became clear that adolescents have a strong moral compass. They spoke repeatedly about their belief that everyone should have equal opportunities. This stance as a common ground offers a good opportunity to start a conversation about possibilities for the future. Who feels that they lack opportunities? Where does this feeling come from? Does it speak to their reality? Is it possible to change your perspective? How can we ensure that everyone has the same opportunities?

De Toneelmakerij creates productions for children and adolescents. Half of our performances are open to the general public, while the other half is performed for schools. Unlike theatre for adults, our audience for school performances is highly diverse, consisting of people from all different groups of society. Prior to *Age of Rage*, De Toneelmakerij staged two successful productions about radicalisation. One protagonist (Jamal) writes hateful messages about Western civilisation on the walls of the school and another protagonist (Nadia) decides at the end of the performance to travel to Syria to support her brothers and sisters in the war. Both productions—just like *Age of Rage*—were received with great acclaim because of their ability to portray major political problems with a human face.

It could generally be considered a good thing when a boy with a migratory background notes in a post-performance

discussion that he can identify with Nadia because he also feels misunderstood in the Netherlands; this means that the performance allowed him to express himself and fostered dialogue on how to make the Netherlands feel like more of a home for this boy. However, when a student would say that they feel uneasy due to the increasing numbers of refugees in their country and that they are glad that De Toneelmakerij is depicting a character with similar concerns, this would generally summon more negative feelings.

This kind of provocative conversation about the topic is exactly what I want to achieve with a production like *Age of Rage*. Instead of silencing people with different points-of-view, I think it is a good thing to listen to the fears these people carry with them. I think that understanding each other's position is essential to overcome polarisation. Other perspectives offer room for important discussions and thereby growth for all parties can be generated. More voices need to be heard. That is exactly where the strength of the theatre lies. ♦

## NEW EUROPEAN DRAMA

# Before Tomorrow

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BY  
**JÁNOS HÓRVATH**

As the generation known by the final letters of the alphabet continues to grow up and become adults in the early twenty-first century, a contradictory situation becomes ever more evident as it arises, creating a huge generation gap—even though, strangely, it in fact appears that the border between generation is now being washed away. One thing surely remains the same: basic human problems are just as universal today than ever before.

MIKLÓS *And we lived together in relative peace, while in my view there has never been two generations that followed each other, and are so different.*

KINGA *Why?*

MIKLÓS *That time I had no telephone, damn it!*

Could this really be so simple? To what extent did the explosion of technological evolutions and ever accelerating information flow support the healthy evolution of the upcoming generation? As in all facets of life, in this regard there is also a flipside to the coin. On average, young people hold their phones in their hands for three to four hours a day. This equals 21-28 hours a week—which means that they spend one full day every week staring at their phone's display. This might be okay if they spent this formidably high amount of time opening new doors for themselves and others to the world. Unfortunately, however, in most cases they actually close the doors in front of others, locking them out. The unparalleled intense and significant presence of social media in our society evolved into some kind of welfare benchmark.

MIKLÓS *The image is all that matters. Life on social media is nothing but a never-ending beauty contest. A continuous demonstration of the fact that you are doing better than others, you eat more delicious food than others, you are more stunning than others. (...) You deem your true self insufficient by now. Insufficient for being loved by others. You do not feel beautiful any more.*

This kind of distorted reflection of the world places continual pressure on young people, and their fear of negative reactions and feedback places stringent limitations on their appearance on each platform regarding both content and aesthetics, ranging from their online presence to showing up in a cafe. They have all the means necessary for freedom right in their hands, and yet the same device prevents them from really being free. Almost all of these contradiction have the potential for interesting drama. Ibsen, Chekhov and many others wrote about expectations, social pressure and desires limited by social frames; their characters were adults, however. In our current era, this problem already vividly exists within the younger generation. In our world, thoughts travel at the speed of light. Or even faster. We all realise that our phone intercepts and traces our movements. If somebody passes us in the street, Facebook prompts us to 'friend' them sooner than we might think of it— or an advertisement for a Mediterranean country discussed in a conversation pops up minutes later, when browsing the net. The internet magnifies our desires. And influences us. Easily and intensely. Building upon the naivety of youth, using credible aesthetic imagery, almost anyone (e.g. influencers) can develop countless misconceptions within this generation.

When a writer starts writing about two generations and the huge divide between them—partly resulting from the lack of communication—he will face the dilemma of deciding which dramatic format is the most suitable to delve into this theme with the proper depth and versatility. I decided on the chamber drama format to build upon the basic situation as it also enables the use of dialogues and disputes—which are now absent in life. An extreme situation like the one staged in *Before Tomorrow*—being isolated before an apocalypse—creates timelessness, enabling characters to raise arguments and confront each other within a dramatic situation. Assuming that the writer exploits the apocalypse as the basic situation to an extreme limit while also hiding secrets in the characters and their relations—then he can easily disguise a dispute-based drama as the genre of thriller, introducing different views and opinions about actual issues stemming from our society. This, however, inevitably requires multi-layered characters. Hitchcock was absolutely accurate when he said that if people are chatting about weather around the table, it is the dulllest conversation on Earth; if, however, there is a bomb ticking under the table, suddenly it becomes the most exciting conversation. I would add though that people around the table should be versatile, frail and therefore loveable enough for me to care about their lives, when I spot the bomb. What generates the feeling of caring for the characters' lives, what makes someone loveable? Let's say they have an objective they want to fight for and achieve, one they must tenaciously pursue. Using an extreme example, I would always root for a champion runner who lost his leg in an accident, but still wishes to become a champion—especially if he would have to give up things like friends or love in return for victory, showing how much he cherishes his goal. But let's



assume we find out that he caused the accident, because, for example, he was drunk driving. He would take a huge hit in the audience's perception. He called the shots. They might say, it's still for the best that he didn't hurt anyone else. But, let's assume we eventually learn that he had actually gotten into the car to save his suffocating girlfriend, delivering her asthma medication. The audience would love him again—probably even more than before.

In the case of *Before Tomorrow*, Kinga, a popular high school girl, has all the stereotypical attributes: She was very cruel to her classmate Norbert, but now that the two of them are locked up together, she confesses that she acted so cruelly because of peer pressure from the other schoolmates. Therefore, her deeds can now be viewed differently as we realise how strong this kind of pressure can be, and we almost forgive her. It is interesting when one of the characters is also aware of spectators' mechanisms, and also uses these. Miklós, the adult holding the two young people locked up in a bunker, understands the simple mechanisms underlying human behaviour. That's why he makes the teenagers believe that in order to save them from the apocalypse (which was a made-up story, as we later find out), he had to leave his wife behind, thus sacrificing her life. With this fictional, yet extremely credible background story, he earns their trust, which can be mercilessly misused. When writing such a play, presenting young people and the slang they use is risky, as the way they speak is so unique and changes so rapidly, making it hard to follow. There were many attempts—especially in Hungarian—to stage the actual slang; they were condemned to fail, however, as these attempts to

create linguistic snapshots are close to impossible: Just as a Polaroid photo takes time to develop, writing and staging a play also takes time, and by the time it is staged, the current slang will have changed. How can one still successfully stage the slang of young people, translating it into the language of theatre? Slang is known for using existing words and expressions totally differently than their original meaning, by changing the format of words. The key, however, is the attitude: meaning the spontaneity and loose way of using them and the cadence. If the dialogue lacks balance, it may easily become forced and inauthentic, completely forsaking the aesthetics of the spoken language. On the other hand, when slang only makes up one to two percent of the dialogue, it is hardly noticeably, even for those speaking it.

Once the writer successfully overcomes difficulties inherent in the genre and age group, all that needs to be done is finishing the play. As if it really were this easy—but let's assume it is. Let's assume we get to the end. How should such a play—one addressing young audiences—conclude? During conversations analysing *Before Tomorrow*, it was often apparent that the question of the outcome of the play is related to how the problems can be overcome. And now, spoiler alert: at the end of the play, Kinga figures out that Miklós was merely holding

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**How can one still  
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them captive, there is no apocalypse brewing and that she spent eight months underground, imprisoned by a psychopath. Having disarmed him, instead of handing him over to the authorities she makes a bad decision and starts using her power against him, treating him more cruelly than he ever was with her. Does she make a bad decision? Yes. Will she learn from it? No. However, the unfolding negative outcome does serve one purpose, namely that the spectator can learn from it. By seeing what the bad decision is and the consequences it has, spectators will be more knowledgeable when taking actions in their own lives. *Before Tomorrow* uses the tool of confrontation as a means of imparting a lesson. Spectators are meant to learn from the fall of the characters, just like we see with *Macbeth* and *Othello*. This type of demonstration and confrontation, coupled with the appropriate drama pedagogical approach may be truly effective and thought provoking for the younger generation. Hopefully they will make the right decisions—as long as they still can. ♦



Fotó: Juhász E

Top: Gergely Csiby and Panka Kovács  
in *Before Tomorrow* (Budapest/Hungary)  
© Éva Juhász  
Bottom: Antos Gémes, Gergely Csiby and  
Panka Kovács (from left to right)  
in *Before Tomorrow* (Budapest/Hungary)  
© Éva Juhász



# Surface Chat or Silent Depth

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BY  
ATTILA RÉTHLY

Weöres Sándor Színház (WSSZ) joined the Age of Rage project group within Young Europe III and, according to my memory, the strategic direction was very different before the ‘fateful’ round of negotiations in Amsterdam.

Prior to the kick-off meeting, the coproduction partners had been considering the issue of national identity as a possible theme, and some of the creative partners were probably ready to commit to this subject. Luckily, however, as we shared this forum with open-minded and tolerant people, the ETC partners listened to and understood my concerns about the chosen topic. This was remarkable, considering that our theatre’s application had only recently been accepted by the Presidency and General Assembly of ETC—and yet they all viewed us as equal partners. As a representative of the new Hungarian member theatre, I would have found it worrisome to work on a project that could potentially have political overtones, even though I really wanted our theatre to join the programme—especially since I had witnessed the birth of the project Young Europe I, back in Nancy, when I was still representing a former ETC member theatre, the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár.

It is an unfortunate, but perhaps not only a Hungarian phenomenon, that our lives are now so intertwined with politics that it is even difficult to talk about perennially relevant issues of human life without them being immediately dragged into the fetid marsh of politics. It is awful, but in Hungary it is now impossible to discuss culture, education, health care—and perhaps it never was?—without political feuding and infighting; furthermore, it is even sadder that, as it seems, the everyday civilian is now losing the battle.

In Hungary nowadays neither culture, nor education,

nor health care, nor the media etc. is free and independent, but instead the victim of petty power games. This situation renders not only the artist vulnerable but the recipient too, not only the student but the teacher, not only the patient but the doctor. This is why I wanted the member theatres of Young Europe III to agree to a comprehensive theme in which our small and enthusiastic workshop could find a relevant issue to discuss without fear, about which we could not be silent. The issue of national identity would be such a topic, of course, and I only wish for us Hungarians that we will be able to talk about it openly, bravely, frankly and with mutual respect in the not too distant future (and hopefully still in our lifetimes).

Since this issue and the anger it triggers are unleashed to an extreme degree in Hungary, I sought to delve into an issue which turns away from “surface chat” and moves towards “silent depth” (Attila József).

To my great joy, after in-depth discussions, our small federation of three theatres was able to agree to a theme relevant in a broader sense—Rage—which could allow all partners to perhaps fulfil their original ideas and let us more freely immerse ourselves in the subject. This is how we became a full partner of the Age of Rage section of Young Europe III. We wish to express our thanks and appreciation to this great community for accepting us.

## **Age of Rage**

After selecting the unifying theme, our primary goal was to achieve the objectives we determined collectively, along with the means defined together. We strove to send questionnaires compiled by our close-knit team (De Toneelmakerij, Deutsches

Theater, WSSZ) to as many students as possible in the target group. We assembled a team of ten students, who kept in touch with the schools as junior ambassadors of Age of Rage. It was their responsibility to familiarise the students with the programme and convince as many young volunteers as possible to complete the questionnaire.

In addition, we conducted 20-to-30-minute video interviews with open-minded young people and set out to explore the possible causes and problems which most infuriate the generation that we had made the subject of our study. After the initial video interviews, it was evident that our project had entered difficult terrain for several reasons: first, the legal limitations regulating interviews with minors are rather intricate; and second, the gravity of the chosen topic hardly allows for in-depth and open discussions. For this reason, whenever we felt a teenage interview subject was about to open up in response to our questions, we ran up against privacy laws and, although the interviews were done with parental permission, we were not or barely allowed to touch upon some important and delicate issues, including sexual identity, religious identity, parent-child or teacher-student relationship, etc. That’s why we attempted to have students conduct the interviews with other students, although these were not as fruitful as the interviews we conducted ourselves.

Despite these hurdles, we of course met students whose stories had the potential to become dramatic theatre, but we handled these stories confidentially in order to protect their privacy, which they in some cases explicitly requested. While maintaining anonymity, we can mention one example of a story that a student told us: he described in length how he realised he was bipolar and needed help. His mother, however, who was

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We can say on an abstract level that one of the main sources of rage among the teenage respondents is 'Family' itself.

a dentist, did not want to hear about his problems, and refused to let him seek professional help or consult a doctor as she feared that he could forget about his education and career if this problem was in his medical records. This teenager told us that his main ambition was to move far away from home

and attend a medical school where, in addition to receiving a professional medical education and training, he could also hope for appropriate treatment for his condition. A moving story. But what else does it reveal?

Almost all of our interviewees come from broken families. It is common for parents to be divorced or unemployed, to struggle with alcoholism or infidelity, and so on. Therefore, we can say on an abstract level that one of the main sources of rage among the teenage respondents is 'Family' itself, even though none of them said that explicitly.

Another source is, without a doubt, school. There were no interviews in which teens failed to say that they were most enraged by school and the related obligations.

To quote a teacher who also appeared in front of the camera: *"In Hungary today, the biggest enemy of the student is the teacher and the biggest enemy of the teacher is the student."* This is an important revelation and yet, in order to avoid a contentious political issue, we decided to focus instead on problems within the family.

That is why, after studying child-parent murders, which now occur in ever greater numbers in Hungary, we selected a specific story to be the topic of our play. The characters' names and ages have of course been changed, as well as the location and the facts and figures included in court documents and printed media. Thus, a fictitious drama, divorced from reality, has now emerged, through which we aim to understand the story and the motives of a matricidal couple. The author has presented us with quite a challenge as we have had to create a theatrically relevant fabric for narrative monologues written in the third person singular. But this is an issue that the production is compelled to explore. ♦

# Experimental Forms and Performative Research

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Developing new research-based theatre experiences for young audiences not only requires opening-up to their perspectives, but also adapting contemporary theatrical forms and languages in order to meet the young people's spirit. Theatre makers Anton Kurt Krause, Lena Fritschle and Miriam Kičiňová share best practices on how to develop immersive gameplays, classroom plays, and theatre texts which are aligned with the visions and language of the teenage interviewees.

# How to Develop Games in (a) Theatre?



BY  
ANTON KURT KRAUSE

**First things first:** Be aware of the problems you create for the audience, a.k.a. the player, and consider the consequences for the theatre. For the player of your game, problems should be interesting yet solvable. This is completely different from any dramatic situation where you have to deal with ineluctable problems. Let's take *Hamlet* as the most obvious example. To sleep or to die is not a solvable problem because it is not interesting to decide. Both options are pretty boring for the rest of the game. But if you as a player can decide to kill your uncle while he is praying or to keep him alive and then perform a play to give him a hell of a catharsis—well that is one pretty interesting choice for the rest of the game. These problems should always relate to and impact your story. So, don't keep Claudius alive via plot twist if your players decide to kill him. Instead, let the players decide and reward them with good or bad options. And let them know whether their solution was good or bad. It is very rewarding to know that you are on the way to winning the game.

**The first problem** that the people have to solve is the most critical. Make sure that they understand that they have to be active, otherwise the game won't work. To take the *Hamlet* example, if the players don't decide what Hamlet should do, then the story or game cannot proceed. One good technique is to clearly define the audience's role, explaining that a part of their job is to solve the first problem. It is a special time in your game when the audience is not yet participating, but about to become an active player, so be careful with this liminal moment in time.

**On another level of thinking** is the question: How should you design your problem for the actual theatre? Which physical aspects shape your game? Do you want the players to just choose via voting tools like TED systems or should

they physically engage in your story like in an exit room? There is a significant difference if you have one Claudius and one Hamlet party voting against each other or LARP<sup>1</sup>-style fighting against each other with foam swords. You also need to consider how the interface of your game dictates the size of the group of players. This is an aesthetic choice, and you must also decide how much distance you prefer between the game and the players. If the audience is on stage, then this decision must be made early on. If you want to stage Hamlet for one actor in a basement, you will have to deal with strict laws and rules managed by the state, not the theatre. Going crazy for Hamlet has to be executed in a very regimented manner. Try to find out and accept the relevant laws, but as a second step you can experiment with them and try to find freedom within this set of constraints. If you want or need more people in one show, try to create an interesting role for the less active part of the audience. Make their role important for the narration. If Hamlet decides which audience members are the actors in his play for Claudius, it becomes very interesting for the part of the audience that observes others solving the problem.

**The last thing to think** about is the gradient of difficulty of your problem and how to develop good working practices to decrease it. If the audience playing Hamlet needs one hour to overcome the first obstacle or just two seconds, then you designed a mediocre game and you will lose much of your audience to either frustration or boredom. You have to have a plan B to push them gently to the solution. People are very different, so this is something that you only find out through testing your game with people who aren't familiar with it. Force yourself to test from the very beginning, for example by inviting people who work at the theatre in the first two-week

testing period. In the third or fourth week, use people close to the theatre like friends or amateur actors. In the final rehearsal week, you should conduct at least two tests with a test audience. If you have actors leading through your game, it is even more important to have sparring partners. Organise this before your rehearsals start, as it will save you time and worry.

**And now let's talk about the problems** you create for the theatre and its staff. I mentioned regulations above but there is a lot more to consider—and thank goodness theatre technicians enjoy solving problems, too. It is your responsibility, however, to make your game manageable inside the theatre's machinery. A very important thing to reflect on is that you exclude linearity in storytelling. This way, parts of the story are left out at some shows but included in others. Here is a quick example of why this could be a problem: Usually the lightning fixtures are programmed so that you have a fixed sequence of scenes. Backstage, the technician pushes one button, and then the next according to a set schedule. There is just one button—not an A button (for when Claudius dies) or a B button (for catharsis). There are many ways to fix this problem, and your technician will find one, but this is a fundamentally different issue. To make things easier, you should assign one person to be the

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**A very important thing to reflect on is that you exclude linearity in storytelling. This way, parts of the story are left out at some shows but included in others.**



game master, this is often the stage manager (who should be relaxed). This person announces the players' decisions and decides what to do should they behave unexpectedly. Involve your game master from the very beginning; after all, if they have to decide what to do, then they need to truly understand the logic of your game, and should understand the world your narration lives in. Try out important technical aspects before you even go on stage. It is very hard to invent a new game in the last week of rehearsals if things don't work out as you planned them in your head.

Technically, in order to give hints where needed, it's important that the game master can see the players and tasks. This sounds obvious, but it is sometimes easier said than done. Surveillance cameras are your best and cheapest friend.

Other than in your game, you don't have to have a solution for all problems. It is more interesting to have a good question and you will be surprised by how much better the solution is than the one you thought of.

**These tips and tricks** are based on my experience. I may get many of these wrong but some of them may save you and encourage you to create a theatre game. Games are good to get a feeling for complex correlations and to develop an understanding of problems you normally don't have. Take Fortinbras, for example: he has to decide if he should fight with his army against Denmark because a crazy dude needs help. Would you put your own soldiers' lives in the hand of a guy who sees ghosts? ♦

<sup>1</sup> Live Action Role Play – this is essentially people who pretend to be fantasy characters, playing in the woods with authentic costumes and foam weapons

Audience at gameplay *Democrisis* in Craiova (Romania) © Vlad Dragulescu



# Creating a Language for and With Young Audiences



BY  
MIRIAM KIČIŇOVÁ

The Slovak National Theatre generally stages the major classics, adaptations of novels, and contemporary plays. The latter can appeal to young audiences and also be helpful in understanding issues like literature and history. We worked together with contemporary authors on new texts and dramas as devised theatre or dramatic texts with an unclassical structure. The fact is, however, that our primary mission does not focus on younger audiences. For this reason, participating in the project Young Europe III posed an array of new questions for us.

The first was: Who are these younger audiences? We already know them, of course, on a certain level: We see them physically sitting in our theatre, watching our shows. They look quite normal, like typical youngsters, with different styles, haircuts and understandings of theatrical works. But the question was: What do they want to see? What are their dreams and desires? Were they pleased with the plays, or just their teachers?

The easiest way to answer these questions is to ask them directly, to kindly ask what are their dreams, what troubles or provokes them, what do they view their families, themselves, their classmates, the climate, country, politics... So, we asked them about these issues—such an obvious solution. And yet, our questions yielded major surprises.

We asked them about 25 open-ended questions in a questionnaire, which we developed with an anthropologist. We asked them about almost everything (such as school, family, free time, social networks), but mostly about what they fear, that is, how they would describe their fear... in connection to their lives, country and family. The list of questions ended up being quite long. The young people said that it took about half hour to complete.

These questions provided us with a small view into the language of young people. And these insights became very important for our playwright's work.

Together with the anthropologist, we reviewed a total of 457 surveys, in an effort to understand the young people's world, that is, what kind of words they use, what kind of stories they reveal. When the anthropologist analysed the answers, he concentrated on the most commonly-used words in order to find similarities or differences in language use.

For example, a question about school (*What are the five most useful things that you learned at school?*) resulted in answers connected with the real subjects taught in school, along with others showing a more metaphorical understanding of utility: The word 'languages' was used in 20% of answers, along with the Slovak language (18.4%), maths (19.5%), history (14.2%), communication (6.8%), literature (2.6%), friends (2.8%), the economy (7.7%) and responsibility (5.7%).

We incorporated our findings into the play, so that our main heroes engaged in long discussions about how adults are responsible for young people, and how young people are responsible to each other.

On the topic of fear, we asked them to name the five things that make them angry in their home environment (in the country, family, or at school). For this question, the most frequently used words resulted in an interesting hierarchy: the most common answer was 'politics', at 21.2%. This is definitely a complicated topic in our country, and teenagers feel it too. This term is also related to 'corruption', at 6.1%. In second place was 'lying' (15.5%). 'School' was third (15.1%), which we hope was meant facetiously. Important fears were connected with bullying (8.1%), drugs (6.8%), transport (6.3), the environment

(18.6%) and family (7.2%). Therefore, the text has a stronger focus on the environment, bullying and family, than on issues like policy or corruption.

We also asked respondents to write down five things they think pose a danger to themselves or society. The top answer was the environment (at 13.2%), followed by politics (12.9%), drugs (10.7%), immigration (4.4%), transport (5.3%), technology (7.2%), lack of access to education (6.8%) and finally again lying (5.7%). All of these issues and words were incorporated into the text. Alexandra Salmela created a very specific environment in which technologies like mobile phones or an internet connection became the most desirable items, while the fear of drugs became a topic of one scene for the main characters.

We received interesting answers for another direct item: *List five things (or situations) that you are afraid of.* On the one hand, some answers concerned existential fears like death (19.5%), loneliness (18.6%) or failure (12.5%), while others focused on traditional sources of fears such as insects (28.5%), heights (10.7%), snakes (12.3%) and the dark (11.4%).

These results were interesting for us, as they helped us to define topics as well as their respective importance to youngsters as we started to formulate the content of the text. This way, the text focused more on how young people understand society than how adults perceive them.

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A fresh take on  
language connected  
with computer  
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of things, lives and  
people.

Thanks to this survey, we also got a sense of their language, lives and desires, as well as their fears. What did we find out? A fresh take on language connected with computer slang, modern abbreviations and rough descriptions of things, lives and people. With this survey we could roughly divide respondents into two groups: The first feels connected to social topics like climate change, extremism, corruption in politics and so on, while the second is the opposite, expressing hatred at almost everything, because almost all influences from outside, abroad, and sometime inside of the family can be blamed for a bad life. On the other hand, it is also possible that they were just joking and sharing their emptiness. And I don't mean this negatively; it is normal, after all, for teenagers to behave this way. Who are we to presume that teenagers would seriously complete a survey composed by adults? Most of them did, however. In fact, for them it was an open space to openly share how they feel...

The next step was to figure out how to best use this language and these emotions, how to incorporate it into the work on the level of playwriting and stagecraft, and stay faithful to the language despite its fragility.

Alexandra Salmela constructed the text word by word, creating a new kind of language that mixes existing words and survey answers, yielding an expressivity that she found in the survey responses, and a language that is located in our archetypal mind, one that alludes to slang or includes what they hear from adults. She really worked to find the right tone of this language, its melody. Almost 75% of the text of *Strange Things* is based on real answers provided by the survey, so it is practically the young people's text.

Our director Júlia Rázusová aimed for the stage language

to be used as a kind of puppet cinema. Language which was created directly on the stage using a lot of small elements, recoding it live and from this perspective created a new picture. She touched the high level of technological thinking of these kids. And with a gentle touch, she addressed their fears about the environment, or their fears of insects, the family, others, differences and loneliness. The performance of *Strange Things* was constructed out of their language and their world, one that is sometimes trapped in mobile phones or computer games, or sometimes found in nature, shopping malls, or just by standing on the edge facing their own fears. ♦

# When the Classroom Learns to Fly (After All)



BY  
LENA FRITSCHLE

In his 1933 work *A Flying Classroom*, the German author Erich Kästner created a vision of a classroom that defies the limits of the possible and rises to fantastic heights. While this vision is in the form of a play within the plot of his popular children's book, it nonetheless provides a space for direct confrontations and collectively experienced adventures. While we can assume that the author did not intend to propose a new concept for integrating theatre into everyday school life when his work underlines the importance of personal experience and cultural encounter, the idea of mobile theatre productions for schools still holds a trace of his utopian vision.

Even though the phenomenon of the classroom play may not be new, especially in the German-speaking world, more and more theatres large and small are leaving their sacred halls and heading to auditoriums, gymnasiums and classrooms. While a stage-like situation can still be created in an auditorium or gymnasium, theatre in a classroom is the most limited kind of mobile production. Preparing the Karlsruhe contribution to Young Europe III once again demonstrated how different the demands on a play are, depending on whether its realisation is intended for the stage or the classroom. Due to different spatial settings for the individual productions of the three partner theatres, it was initially difficult to develop material as a collaboration once concrete ideas for implementation came into play. It should be noted that what works in the classroom remains feasible on stage, while the opposite is obviously much more difficult.

Performing in a classroom does not seem very enticing at first glance: it entails a maximum performance time of sixty minutes, early morning travel, logistical restrictions with regard to props, scene changes and ensemble size, and almost

no support in the form of stage design, lighting or other typical production means in the theatre. These constraints raise questions that are never relevant for a stage production: How much can the situation convey, that is, how much of the world can fit into a classroom? And further, how can this world be manifested with a small selection of props and nevertheless be rendered as realistic and plausible as possible? A text conceived for this purpose can choose either to make major claims or deploy the fewest words possible to create vivid imagery spoken by the actors. In this format, conveying a place, time and situation is the sole responsibility of the actors; generally, there are no dramaturgical aids such as stage sets to set the scene or light changes to create atmosphere. In addition, neither the ramp nor the Fourth Wall keep the audience in check. Instead, the actors have to create entire worlds solely through their own performances, and they have to accomplish this in a variety of spaces. Under these circumstances, the physical co-presence of the actors and their audience plays an especially important role. When they go to the theatre, school-aged children leave the structure of their everyday lives behind and are required to submit to a set of rules that apply to a larger theatre audience; in the case of a classroom play, however, the situation is almost reversed: here, the actors enter into the morning routine of the exclusive audience-forming class community, where they are subjected to the unwritten rules of their everyday dynamics. While every theatrical space, even the most intimate studio stage, is inscribed within the clear framework of the as-if and the particularities of a foreign site, which serves to create distance, the play performed between the blackboard and the seats has to address the audience in their familiar everyday world. Whether the audience consists

of adolescents or primary school children, they usually play according to their own rules in their 'own' four walls, posing questions and making demands more clearly than they would have on a visit to the theatre.

So why bother? Why do we accept all of these constraints and perform theatre in classrooms?

Do we do it just to save the teachers the trouble of traveling to the theatre? Well, yes. Especially in rural areas, the costs and logistics required to travel to the theatre can present insurmountable obstacles, so this is an important step in bringing theatre to every child. However, there is more to it: The exclusivity of the performance for this closed group of people creates a special bond between the characters and their audience. Unlike in a classic theatre situation, the dividing line does not run between the actors on stage and the audience in front of it, but rather between the transformed world of the classroom and the outside world. Furthermore, not only do pupils experience their classroom in a completely different way, but the teachers do as well. Being put in an observatory position, they become part of the audience, too. The constellation of relationships in the classroom shifts and group dynamics change. Another aspect of a classroom play that cannot be recreated in any other theatre setting in quite the same way is the common wrap-up phase, most commonly

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**The exclusivity of the performance for this closed group of people creates a special bond between the characters and their audience.**



consisting of the opportunity to ask the actors questions and talk about the play or a series of theatre-pedagogical exercises in a group that is already familiar with each other.

Theatre in a classroom cannot and does not want to be either a substitute or a competing event to a performance in a 'real' theatre. Nevertheless, every aspect that has been mentioned as a challenge for production teams in creating theatre pieces for the classroom at the same time is an opportunity to experience theatre in its most basic, rawest form. It does offer a unique set of experiences that open up the world of theatre to pupils with such immediacy that it can make a lasting impression on them, demonstrating how a simple play can transform the reality of a room. Here we come back to Erich Kästner's vision, in which the everyday life of a classroom community becomes a shared adventure that forges connections between a person's own, everyday world and the big, wide world outside. In so doing it creates both the desire and courage to experience more of it. ♦



*Top:* Alisa Kunina and audience  
in classroom play *Plan(et) B* (Karlsruhe/Germany)  
© Arno Kohlem  
*Bottom:* Nazim Dario Neumann and Laura Eichten  
in classroom play *Rage* (Berlin/Germany)  
© Arno Declair

# Audience Development – Empowering Youth Through Theatre

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Audience development implies giving broader access to theatre. Not only by bringing in new audiences but also by mediating theatre's role in shaping diverse societies. In light of recent political events, trends of nationalism, isolationism and high levels of youth unemployment across Europe, this is more important than ever before. Playwright Jules Buchholtz and the Junges DT offer insights on how theatrical scenarios and active youth involvement in decision processes can contribute both to audience development and shaping a democratic mindset.



# Democrisis

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BY

JULES BUCHHOLTZ

*Why democracies are not about doing the right thing, but about how the right thing is always being done in the right way.*

## **Politics as a narrative and the problems therein**

The starting point for our work on the complex of democracy and nationalism was twofold: after several discussions about the causes underlying Europe's regression into nationalism, the following two terms turned out to be crucial for our understanding of the nexus of democracy and nationalism: populism and conviction, as will be explained below.

The second aspect we came up with was the fact that the European idea of joining sovereign national states is nowadays more and more conveyed by a narrative; by a story, that is being told with a somewhat commercial slant; a narrative, that can either be believed or not, but is not being experienced. We think that Europe can be understood by understanding the history of the various groups of people and by understanding and appreciating all the aspects of being very different and at the same time still sharing the same fate.

## **Experience-based political decision-making**

Hence, we wanted to address the topic as experience-based as possible, because our work with youngsters has taught us that physically accessible knowledge is more enduring and sustainable, especially for young people.

This is an insight that we gained from our work with scenarios.

*A scenario is essentially a written script, or an outline for a story that will require further development before it is actualised. It is, therefore, a sketch for an imagined situation. (...) Scenarios*

are tools for helping us to take a long view in a world of great uncertainty. The name comes from the theatrical term scenario. (...) In this context the precise definition of 'scenario' is: a tool for ordering one's perceptions about alternative future environments, in which one's decision might be played out.<sup>1</sup>

In the above-mentioned sense, scenarios—which by the way are tools that stem from the theatre—usually do not only reveal content in a regular, scholarly way; rather, instead of showing one aspect or part of a situation, scenarios depict a course of action and the outcome and consequences of decision-making. When dealing with a scenario, the viewer is able to take part in an event, rather than just gaining information about it.

Scenarios display contexts multi-dimensionally, thereby also highlighting the consequences of a decision. In this way scenarios visualise content in a manner that enables the viewer to not just receive information, but actively participate in whatever is being shown in an immersive, emotionally-affecting way. But as scenarios are quite powerful and moving means of display, their mode of depicting future realities and current situations does not always result in desirable states of mind.

If you remember Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth: A Global Warm(n)ing* (2006), in which he climbs a contraption on stage in order to reach the top of the temperature graph in 2050, then you know that this method of displaying facts and gaining knowledge is dramatically different than just reading numbers in a book. The theatre and hence also the scenario bring facts to life. We can think about and understand the term 'accessible knowledge' in a similar way when we speak about the theatre and how it can enable us to not just learn, but actively take part

in the act of receiving new ideas. However, the act of reflecting and questioning these ideas is just as important as receiving new ideas. Information—especially nowadays—must always be checked for accuracy.

## Emotion-infused decisions

The sort of 'Think-Event' found in the aforementioned film by Al Gore is what we were aiming for when we started thinking about our approach towards the topic of democracy and nationalism.

We wanted to involve our viewers, give them the chance to take decisions and enable them to experience the consequences of their choices. Finally, we ended up creating an accessible scenario in the manner of an escape room-like gameplay. But still, scenarios are tools to rehearse future realities in the first place. They can—in the worst case—easily threaten people and evoke strong emotional reactions in viewers. By showing the possible future state of a community, scenarios have the potential to directly manipulate people's beliefs and their readiness to take immediate action, as I have also pointed out in my academic research on scenarios (*Wem gehört die Zukunft? Wissen und Wahrheit im Szenario*<sup>2</sup>). On the one hand, we wanted to deliver a theatrical experience guided by action to the fullest extent possible, while on the other hand, we did not want to create a situation to choose between an alleged 'good' and an alleged 'evil', as we firmly believe in thinking, reflective and considered decision-making. That is why we are convinced that the use of scenarios—especially with young people—should always be carefully considered, especially when it comes to political decision-making. Hence, we reflected on the impact scenarios can have on people's

mind-sets and readiness to make decisions very critically and carefully.

Should decision-making be based on emotions like panic and fear, anger and frustration, and made while under pressure and being pushed towards an opinion, or because there are no alternatives? We think that political decision-making should never be based only on emotions.

We identified these emotional effects as crucial when it comes to distinguishing between a well-reflected, autonomously-made and considered political decision from fear-infused and highly reactive, panic-driven decision-making. The moment of distinguishing between a moderate, rational representation of policy and a populist agenda of emotionally-coded opinions is the crucial part of the story for our topic.

### **Populism works well on both sides**

Although it is frequently becoming en vogue to have feelings about a decision rather than arriving at it via careful reflection, we came to the conclusion that emotional pressure is not an ideal instrument to prompt people to make up their minds. In fact, the opposite is true: Pushing for a decision, manipulating people's opinions by emotionally involving them and having them imagine themselves in a future state of reality anticipated by a scenario can be actually considered a driver of populism—no matter which political hue it might serve.

That is why the emotional involvement of people is generally a manipulative tool and hence cannot be considered fair or as a legitimate instrument to guide voters' actions. Addressing people's emotions explicitly does not address their reasoning, people's capabilities of critical reflexion or their clear considerations. The opposite is the case: As a scenario

aims instead to trigger immediate emotional reactions, it should never be the main source of information or the basis of personal decision-making.

We concluded, therefore, that neither solely affective triggering and emotions nor cold calculation alone should lie at the heart of any process of making up our minds and voting for a political course of action.

### **A society is only as good as its members' ability to reflect on their convictions**

But where do our opinions actually come from? And how do we know what we think we know? What are the sources of our knowledge? Why are we so sure that what we want is also just and good for us? How can we be sure that everything that feels right is also good? Do we really have a choice? And isn't a democracy only as good as the mental acuity of its voters? Is it true that most people's opinions are necessarily the best possible opinions? What can we learn from Europe's mass movements during the middle of the twentieth century? Furthermore, if a democracy is able to change everything about itself based on the will of the majority, can it also change itself into a non-democratic form of governance? And, a question of the utmost importance: Does a democracy depend on well-informed citizens? What if the masses are being emotionally manipulated? If a community or a society's fate is totally dependent on the will of the majority, then it is completely regulated by how knowledgeable and well-informed its majority is. The upshot: It is crucial that the majority always be well informed, politically educated, reasonable, fair, responsible and always ready to truly reflect upon its own interests. The bad news: This is almost never the case.

## **So: What can be done?**

This is what makes democracies so volatile and vulnerable to psychologic and emotional influences; this is also why our democracies are advanced yet weak. For instance: a few decades ago during the Cold War, when Europe was politically separated, foreign military interventions aimed to directly manipulate public opinion in the various countries. Foreign militaries tried to influence their adversary's population, in order to manipulate a country's basis of decision-making. The US took action in Western Europe, especially West Germany, while the Soviets took action in East Germany. These undertakings, some of which are still occurring, were called 'information operations' and even included the establishment of TV stations with programmes designed to influence public opinion.

## **What does a democracy look like?**

The above-mentioned nexus between information and democratic decision-making shows that—as astonishing as it sounds—in a democracy it is easier to influence what people think than how they make decisions. This is also why the source of information, the interests that go along with choices and the way information is encoded, disseminated and targeted is of such great relevance.

From this point of view, the role of media, the state of information and the ability to manipulate what people actually think, believe in and hope for is of vital importance and one of the most, if not the most important, issue required to make democracies work.

That is why we chose to illuminate the nexus between populism and democracy and why we chose to involve our

young viewers in an intriguing game in which they pretend to do the right thing. We did so by opting for a form of experimental, experience-based performance to convey our topic rather than a classical play. We did this because we wanted to show where our convictions, knowledge and belief in the 'good' actually stem from. We wanted to lay open the connection that exists between conviction and populism and, finally, how populism-prone a democracy really is.

The gameplay we developed asks the players to continually make decisions, prompts the players to do the right thing, triggers emotions and tries to push and manipulate the viewers—who are actually the players—by arguing in the name of necessity, global-collapse and greater relevance. Without the players' knowledge, their decisions are being completely manipulated, so without even realising it the players are tricked into playing a malicious game that successfully drives them to totalitarianism.

## **Synopsis**

No other governmental form relies so much on opinion and conviction than a democracy. Whereas in any regime a small elite command what is to be done, a democracy totally depends on its members to make up their minds and take decisions on their own.

On the one hand, the democratic system ensures that decisions are made that the majority believes to be right. On the other hand, however, it is absolutely indispensable for a democracy that its members have access to information, learn about their options and consider the consequences thereof. In a democracy, everybody—all citizens—can be held responsible for a state's decision-making.

But to make a decision, people have to be informed. This is—and this might come as a surprise to some—the reason why people in democracies are much more prone to populism than in regimes. Minds, opinions and convictions are targeted by many institutions and are easily manipulated by all sorts of sources, influencers, companies and all types of institutions, including states. This is why populism as a way of influencing people’s minds turns out to be necessary in a democracy and hence needs to be addressed, because each side of the political spectrum, every company and lobby works to influence people’s decision-making.

What can we do about it? What can we do to ensure that not only the best decisions are taken, but that the best decisions are taken by free, autonomous human beings who are capable of self-reflection and care not only about ‘what’ is being done, but about ‘how’ it is being done? What can we do to honestly and clearly reflect upon the quality of our own decision-making? How can we avoid reacting only to future realities? In short: In a democracy, power lies in the hands of the population. If you want to reign in a democracy, you will necessarily have to influence the majority of the population. And if you cannot influence the majority’s decision-making, you can still try to influence what the majority thinks it wants.

**It is not enough to ask what we want; instead, we have to ask why we want what we want, and where our freedom to make these choices comes from.**

That is why it is not enough to ask whether a decision is right or wrong. That is why it is not enough to look at what ideas a candidate seems to stand for. That is why it is not enough to distinguish between left and right. It is not enough.

Four questions to not only do something, but also to make sure that what is being done is done in a democratic way.

It is only enough when we have asked ourselves the following questions:

- What do I want?
- Is what I want better than what others want, and, if so, why?
- How can I be so sure that what I want is better than what somebody else wants?
- Why do I want what I want?

We asked these questions by setting up a gameplay, in which the young participants were influenced by an artificial intelligence that seemed friendly, but instead lured the players into a trap. The AI is trying to establish a totalitarian regime by convincing the players that this kind of regime was the only way to avoid global catastrophe. Being prompted and pushed in time-critical situation in an escape room-like scenario, the players are easily talked into taking a decision that only seems to be right, but actually results in the free-willing abolishment of all rights of freedom.

By this we tried to enable people to experience how their opinions can be imperceptibly influenced by interests that are not really their own in order to make people sensitive to the fact that the source of what they think is their own free will is often external to their own minds. ♦

—  
<sup>1</sup> Peter Schwartz: *The Art of Longview*, New York: DoubleDay, 1989, S. 4  
<sup>2</sup> Jules Buchholtz, Berlin: Neofelis, 2019

# Theatre Not Only For, but With the Youth

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BY  
LASSE SCHEIBA

*A conversation with the Youth Council of the Deutsches Theater Berlin*

Productions and theatre projects with young people are staged every season at the Deutsches Theater Berlin (Germany). That's why Junges DT (Young DT) formed a Youth Council to represent the interests of younger audiences and advise the youth division of Deutsches Theater Berlin on its season planning.

Fifteen young people make their entrance on the second largest stage of the Deutsches Theater—and are immediately struck by stage fright. The audience is waiting: Mom and Dad, Grandma and Grandpa, even aunts are in attendance. Along with a few school classes. People their own age! Now what? According to the playbill, they're staging *The Robbers* by Friedrich Schiller! Angrily, the young performers face their audience: "Okay, hands on your heart: Who honestly believes that we can perform something like Schiller? Admit it, while you were waiting in the foyer just now did you think: 'Geez, I hope they don't mess this one up?' Fuck you! We're the same age Schiller was when he wrote *The Robbers*! 'Oh! Young people are performing in *The Robbers*, so I can visit it with my school class and take an exam on it.' Fuck you! 'Hopefully the play will mention Greta Thunberg and #metoo, the food industry, cruises, bullying, gentrification.' Fuck you!", the performers on stage shout, with raised middle fingers.

In Joanna Praml's production of *The Robbers*, performers between the age of fourteen and twenty years old examine the themes raised in the Schiller classic, while also questioning their desire to be on stage. In doing so, they become a band of outlaws, holding all German artistic directors hostage under

the stage, thus pointing out how society demands that this generation do something, without believing they are capable.

Since 2009, the Junges DT has actively sought to foster a playful dialogue about art and the world we live in—in collaboration with young people between twelve and 22 years old. Here, younger points-of-view and energy encounter dramatic masterpieces as well as major issues, as they conquer theatrical stages with interdisciplinary formats and diverse ensembles. Particularly noteworthy are the professional repertory productions in which young people perform on stage—several times over the course of a month, not just for a one-time final presentation. For some productions, they even perform with the theatre’s professional ensemble. Other formats such as theatre clubs and holiday projects offer young people the chance to create new productions themselves and present their topics with the support of artists from the fields of theatre, performance and dance.

These productions at a renowned German theatre are about more than just a hobby or ‘tricking’ teenagers into the theatre; instead, they offer a serious outlet for younger perspectives. All projects invite young people not only to watch, but also to create theatre. The youth council was founded in 2019 to uphold this mission and consists of six young performers from different productions and projects of the theatre. The council members are provided with a forum to propose changes and recommend what they would like to see on stage. They represent all young people performing at the Deutsches Theater, as well as a younger generation that loves the theatre, but also sees room for improvement.

In this interview, dramaturge Lasse Scheiba talked to five members of the youth council about their motivations for

participating in theatre, why they think youth councils are a good thing and how they think theatres could become more attractive to younger audiences.

**Eren:** My name is Mustafa Eren Özdilberler and I am 17 years old. I joined the Young DT in 2017. I came to the theatre through projects at my school.

**Rana:** My name is Rana Tuzlali and I am 16 years old. I came to Deutsches Theater through a friend. I have been acting here since 2015.

**Emil:** My name is Emil Kollmann. I came to this theatre through my mother and I have been here since 2013. I am 18 years old.

**Leni:** Hello, my name is Leni von der Waydbrink, I’m 19 years old and I have been performing here since 2018.

**Frida:** I am Frida, I’m 17 years old and my first project at the Junges DT was staged last year. 2018.

*The final member is Jasmin Fifassi Sebastiani, 20 years old and a member of the Junges DT since 2018, who could not be here today. You all perform in projects and shows here. Why the theatre? Why not another hobby?*

**Leni:** For starters, I think it’s better to go see a performance instead of lying around on the couch. And on the other hand, I really enjoy acting and it gives me a lot. I always rediscover myself while acting and can try out different identities. But the coolest thing about it is the community that it creates. That you can come here and say, “Look, that’s Richi from the audio department, and that’s Lasse from dramaturgy”. You know, the people who seem ‘larger than life’. I think it’s awesome to say that I’m a part of it all.

**Rana:** In every rehearsal process you learn so much about yourself and how to work with other people. Everyone has a different reason to do theatre, but I come here to be more myself. In the theatre I can show my identity from a variety of perspectives. I'm just much more open here.

**Leni:** It offers such therapeutic aspects. And it creates a feeling of family. We can talk to each other openly here.

**Emil:** I have been acting at the Junges DT for nine years now, and it has always been a refuge for me. It still is. On the one hand, when I watch theatre, and become engrossed like I never am at the movies, it's as though I am immersed in a dream world. On the other hand, the people I have met here are very important to me. And I like being on stage, because I don't have to be myself for 90 minutes. And at the same time, when I perform I can let out emotions that you can't always show in everyday life.

*In addition to acting, you're also members of the Youth Council. Can you tell me more about the Youth Council?*

**Frida:** We meet once a month and sit together with Lasse, the dramaturge of Junges DT. He always asks us a lot of questions about topics discussed in the Junges DT team. It's a great feeling that they want to hear our opinion, and that we are listened to on equal terms. We advise the Junges DT and the theatre as young people. We are asked to share our thoughts on the season's theme. We read plays that could be performed and say whether we are interested in them. We watch the premieres and share our opinions, for example if we would recommend them to other young people or if they are even suitable for school classes. I also find the representation for which the Youth Council stands very important: We are

the Junges DT and we are more than different ensembles and projects, but a large group of theatre-loving young people!

**Emil:** Part of our job is to advocate for young performers. We make sure that everyone feels treated fairly and has access to the same opportunities. I also consider ourselves mediators. For example, I brought up the fact that there is no food and drink allowance for long rehearsals. That could be a problem because not everyone can afford lunch when we rehearse all day on the weekend. And now there are discussions at the Junges DT about whether a catering fund could be established. They didn't have anything like that on the agenda before.

*What are your personal goals for the Youth Council? What do you want to achieve?*

**Rana:** I believe it is just a good system to have a say, to make suggestions and to involve the young people more—in other words, that we are on an equal level.

**Leni:** My goal is to heighten our visibility at the theatre, both within and without, and say: *"We have a space here and we use it, we use it to the fullest extent possible and you can't do anything about it, we are here now! So, deal with it"*.

**Frida:** I think visibility is very important, but my goal is to get young people into the theatre, to show them how great it is. I would also like to give feedback to the theatre. That can be a very big step towards making it more accessible for larger groups of young people. We as young audiences should say what works for us and what doesn't.

**Emil:** What attracted me was the opportunity to help plan the new season.

**Eren:** I want to protect the space that I love so much in theatre. To preserve the kind of protective dome that theatre



is for many young people, especially those who are outside of the mainstream and don't want to conform to society.

*Theatres or theatre critics like to complain or wonder about the fact that young people supposedly no longer come to the theatre. Do you agree with this assessment? And if so, how do you think this could be changed?*

**Leni:** I think that access to theatre as a young person is still quite limited. It depends on many different factors, such as money. Nine Euro for a theatre ticket is still a lot of money... Theatre is not only for old, white, 60 year olds who can afford the 60 Euro tickets in the first row!

**Rana:** I think it is important to show to the public that young people are interested in theatre and not only adults. They exist—the theatre-loving youth!

**Eren:** Maybe, but we can't say that young people are interested in theatre in general. That's simply not the case. It's another world for the people I know from school. I grew up in Berlin's Kreuzberg district and my only encounter with theatre came through school. I can certainly say that very few young people in my environment are interested in theatre.

**Emil:** I actually see many young people in the audience of the Deutsches Theater. Even though there is still a lot to do.

**Rana:** Yes, but not as young as we are. I would say it's due to the image of theatre. Many people think it's Romeo and Juliet, and the actors wear wigs and deliver monologues, and at the end everyone claps.

**Eren:** It's a global problem that people aren't interested in theatre. I think young people generally have fewer leisure activities. Instead, everyone just watches Netflix: 'Netflix and chill.'

**Frida:** Maybe we need 'theatre and chill'!?  
*(Everyone laughs)*

*Let's say the management of a theatre were to call and ask: Dear Youth Council, what can we do to bring more young people into our theatre?*

**Frida:** Many people think that the old plays are boring and the modern plays are hard to understand. And often I feel the same, to be honest. You sit in the auditorium as a young person and you know that they're talking about something important and political, but you don't really understand it. I don't want to experience something like that, because it makes me feel apolitical and stupid. That's why theatres should also produce plays that are really intended for younger audiences. When I see plays at the Junges DT, the people on stage have problems that I can relate to. But if you see a performance that is boring or you can't understand, it's obvious that you think afterwards: 'I'm not doing that again, what a waste of time!'

**Eren:** Yeah, I think it would actually make a difference to do more performances that are fun! I didn't grow up with theatre and I had this stereotypical image that it's boring—a few actors stand in front, babbling on and on and you don't understand a thing... And that cliché was often confirmed for me, at least until I saw so many performances that it was no longer confirmed.

**Emil:** I find classroom plays important, which the Junges DT offers, and that are performed in schools. I am fortunate to come from a family that is very interested in theatre, but I believe that many people whose families don't have that interest simply don't go to the theatre, and never change their negative image of it. Once they have a positive experience,

it triggers something: I can go to the theatre and it might be really cool.

**Leni:** The four most important factors for me would be accessibility (in terms of ticket prices, for example), diversity in the ensemble and programme, artistic freedom and understanding for people who say: *“I want to understand what’s happening and have fun doing it”*. These are the things that bring me to the theatre again and again. Especially when the ensemble lacks diversity, it quickly makes people feel excluded. So it’s about showing everyone: *“No matter where you come from or where your parents came from, our theatre is open to everyone”*. That is the accessibility I would like to see at every theatre. I believe that the Junges DT sets a good example. You feel welcome here and the people who are a part of it are very diverse.

**Emil:** Projects with young people and a youth advisory board are a good start. This has a real impact on the audience, schools, parents and young people in the city, as everyone can see that this theatre takes the youth seriously. That young people have a say. ♦

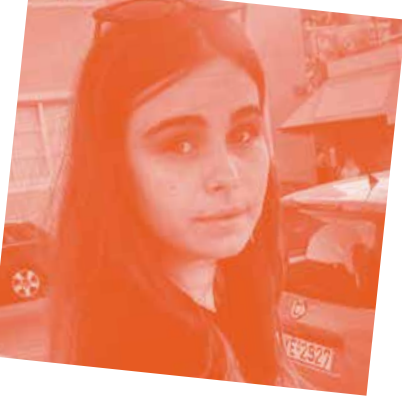


Junges DT Youth Council with dramaturg  
Lasse Scheiba at Deutsches Theater Berlin (Germany)  
© Lasse Scheiba

# Young European Voices

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Raising young people's voices across Europe, exploring their hopes and dreams, their fears and insecurities, and developing a new European theatre repertory inspired by this, was at the core of the Young Europe III project. Not only were teenagers from Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Netherlands and Austria involved in the performative research and production processes but also invited to enter into an in-depth dialogue about the topics as part of a Young Europe Festival in 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, their gathering shall be postponed. But their voices will still be heard!



***Georgiana from Craiova says:***

**YOUTH**—what a powerful and strengthening word, full of hope, fear, uncertainty and the brightly-coloured prospects of a better future. It has always been thought that the younger generation will be the one that dares to soar into the unstable state of our society and take the initiative to mitigate already-existing problems. To be honest, there is a certain tendency to place considerable pressure on the shoulders of the youth, considering them individuals from whom everyone expects glorious deeds.

To me, **YOUTH** is indeed a powerful and strengthening word, not only because of the great expectations with which we are regarded, but also because I know in my heart that we are the ground-breakers, the ones that break the mould. We are young, in our teens, and yet this does not inevitably imply that we shouldn't have a voice. We are young, far away from the hectic and poisonous environments of our leaders, therefore we are more likely to express a clearer opinion, not being restrained by any boundaries and social restrictions. Injustices in our faulty system exist all around

the world, and hence, as citizens of this globe and well-aware of the current situation, it is our duty to intervene and take a stand. Whether we are talking about our educational system or the level of pollution that wreaks havoc on the environment, we are responsible for creating a safer and more harmonious world in which one can properly thrive as well.

When tackling this extremely delicate and barely definable subject of changing the world it is essential to affirm one point: **Change starts with yourself!** It is absolutely impossible for us to fight wars or stop famine. Instead, we, as the proud representatives of the younger generation must, acknowledge that our everyday actions and activities are strictly connected to what happens on a wider level. Therefore, it is only in our power to create ourselves as our most intense version and accept this as a form of uprising against the appalling problems of our society. We need to make our voices heard and we deserve to be treated with further consideration as humans with the ability to assert steady and valuable viewpoints towards our demands, ranging from school, health, culture and environmental issues.

A valuable proof of the impact of **YOUTH** is the case of Greta Thunberg, the seventeen-year-old environmental activist for climate change who had the courage to speak out about the horrible consequences of pollution. She is an icon for the young, full of ideas, fearless, high-spirited and prepared to fight against inequality.

**There has always been a therapeutic and alleviating effect that the idea of future had upon the conscience of human beings, representing the one period in which the eventuality of progress and improvement was underscored; thus, we look forward to being not merely witnesses, but important actors of change on the complex stage of this world.**

*Georgiana (18), Gia for short, just finished the eleventh grade at "Fratii Buzesti" National College in Craiova (Romania) and is planning to pursue a career in acting. She is very keen on singing and playing the guitar and she is part of a local band. She loves reading, writing and learning all kinds of new things and considers herself to be a professional dreamer!*



### **Chiara from Karlsruhe says:**

**About the European Future—What does the future of Europe look like? A question that many have probably already asked themselves, especially in times of the Brexit. When you hear the word Europe, you think directly of the European Union, because the future of Europe is strongly dependent on the EU. When I think about the future, many things come to my mind, which are not only specifically addressed to Europe, but have a general validity. Important topics are the climate, asylum and migration policy, the economy and not to forget the increasing digitalisation and globalisation.**

**We average citizens always think that our actions have no influence, but we can do much more than we think. We have the right to vote, which we should use to guide the decisions that affect us all. Elections cannot be taken for granted, because democracy is not everywhere. Democracy is an important part of the EU and also of Europe, which we should not under any circumstances ignore and which should be maintained. We also have a lot to contribute to the climate. We can do more with bicycles or use public**

transport. We can eat more regional food and we can do even more to protect the climate. This action is important to maintain easy travel between all EU countries. Through globalisation we have the advantage of getting from A to B so easily that we should not destroy ourselves just because we are too lazy to vote or care about the environment.

If everyone changes their behaviour, this will have a major impact on us all and on the future. Politicians have the task of implementing our wishes and identifying problems so that things like Brexit in particular no longer occur.

We humans have to do more and not postpone it any longer, so that the next generations are at least as well off as we are!

*Chiara Gallo (18) was born in Karlsruhe (Germany) where she has lived for her whole life. Last year she graduated from school and is now preparing to move to Austria in order to study psychology. One of her life goals is to become a sexual health therapist with her own practice. In her spare time she enjoys sports, meeting friends and playing theatre.*



**Samar from Amsterdam says:**

The subject I would like to raise is *racism* and the *fear* that turns into *rage* and then *crime*...

First of all what is racism exactly? For me racism is when someone has no respect for a person.

People are no longer open to new things, it seems as if they are afraid of the unknown and do not delve into things and therefore simply believe everything and adopt what they see/hear on the news/tv. Because of this ignorance, fear is created and after a while fear becomes anger. How often do you hear that someone has been attacked because of his or her conviction. Wars are starting because of this ignorance. Or that people go into crime because they cannot find a job because of their origin...

I am concerned that in the future people will only be prejudiced and not open to wanting to know different religions and nationalities. That everyone keeps thinking in boxes... You don't have to agree with someone else's conviction, but respect that someone as a person and show everyone's worth.

**I think this is a very important factor in life for today's youth. We see this happening around us and maybe some experience it themselves.**

**I sincerely believe that the youth can change this. We see, think and do things differently, we are more open to new things.**

*Samar Kalkoul (20) was born in Almere in the Netherlands where she has lived for almost 17 years. From ages 2 to 4 she lived in Germany. She is in her second year at ROC Zuid and currently studies Marketing and Communication in Amsterdam. Alongside school, she works as a volunteer at De Toneelmakerij and likes to do fun things with her family and friends in her spare time. She loves to read, especially books that are based on true stories.*



**Jana from Graz says:**

**I won't waste my time telling you simply about my future, because I am just one of more than seven billion. I asked different people about their hopes and fears concerning what is yet to come. The result was a story and this story is what I would like to read to you now.**

**It is called *The Pearl Necklace*. Once upon a time, in the middle of nowhere, lived thousands of pearls. White ones, grey ones, and black ones, bigger ones and smaller ones, ones that shone like the stars or were as dark as the night sky. They were all magically bound together, where they formed a circle, called the pearl necklace. And only as a part of this necklace were they able to live.**

**Everyday some pearls fell off and new ones appeared. Sometimes the pearls fought each other and then they made peace until a new war broke out. Some of the pearls were poor and hungry, while others didn't know what to do with their wealth. Some were strong and others were weak. Some were happy and others were sad. But what they all had in common were hopes and dreams, but also fears and insecurities about their future.**

**"I hope that the current generation of adults takes enough care of the earth, so that the next generations can enjoy our beautiful planet too."**

**"I want my children and I to stay happy and healthy."**

**"I wish for the school system to be reformed. Less focus on achievement, more on the people there."**

**"I want my parents to be proud of me."**

**"I hope that parents and legal guardians realise the real needs of their children and act accordingly."**

**"I hope that young people live their lives to the fullest."**

**"I want a job that makes me happy."**

**"I want a house."**

**"Consumerism should stop."**

**"I am afraid of arrogance and foolishness, and so I wish that the clever and responsible do not keep silent."**

**"I wish that our economy and our society remain peacefully stable, so that our descendants can leave their houses without being afraid, knowing they have rights and liberties."**

**"I wish for everybody to find God in their lives and thereby have a happy life in a better society."**

**"In my future I want to spend more time with the people I love."**

**"It would be great to solve all problems around the world without war, violence and weapons."**

**"I am afraid to lose people that are by my side now."**

**"I am afraid that our world will go completely in the wrong direction."**

**"I am afraid my dreams will never come true."**

**And yes my ladies and gentlemen, yes, we all are.**

**We all have hopes and dreams and the bigger they are, the more not achieving them frightens us. But let me tell you something: As long as our magic bond lasts, you do not have to be afraid. Look around you. You are here with all those other people. You are in a theatre. This is only one of many fantastic opportunities to meet others, strengthen our society and let our magic bond continue.**

**And so, finally, here is my wish: I want this world to never run out of those possibilities, because if we have them and use them, it means that our magic bond stays alive. It means that the pearl necklace endures and it means that it is not hopeless to hope.**

*Jana Tsybrovskyy (17) is a student in the city of Graz, Austria, where she was born. At a young age she discovered her affection for the theatre. Besides being on stage and enjoying theatre plays as a part of the audience, she loves playing tennis and spending time with her family and friends. Although she likes laughing and joking, serious and philosophic conversations make up a crucial part of her interpersonal relationships.*

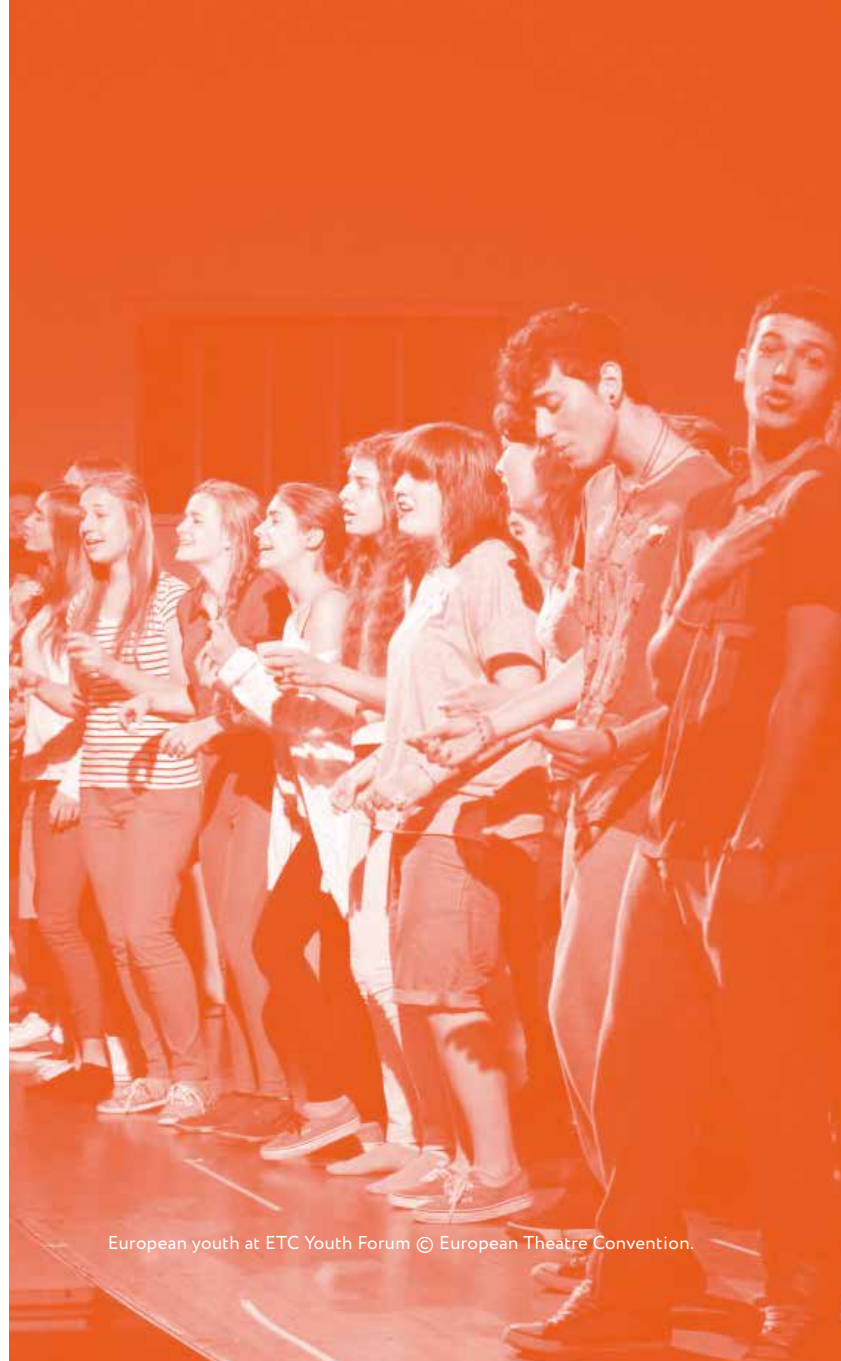




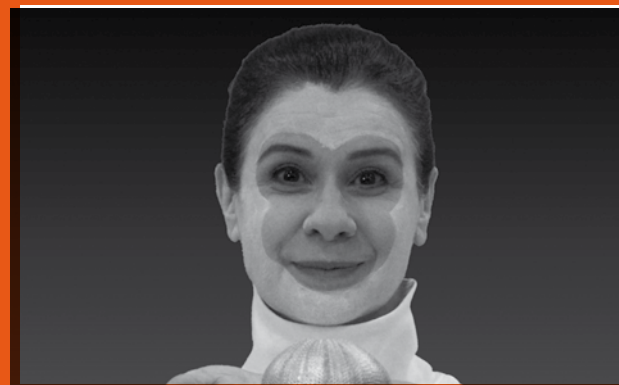
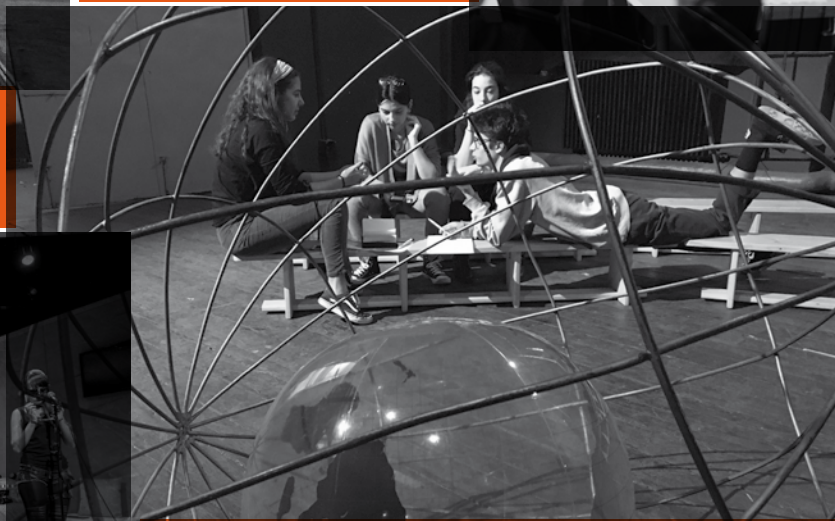
**Laura from Szombathely says:**

**As a young woman in the 21st century, I strongly believe in a world where we do not have to be afraid of being ourselves. Where we can be more than an echo—not mere sounds lingering, but voices that are heard. Through my art I aim to express how I perceive the world around us while trying to speak up about the problems our generation faces, in hopes that my contemporaries might find comfort in it—or see a reflection of themselves, even. To me, if there is even one person who resonates with my art or performance, it is worth everything. And if we dare reach for the stars, there is nothing we cannot do.**

*Laura Szabó (19), “Lala” for short, has been involved in several cultural projects and art groups in the past years, though she leans more towards performing arts. She does poetry slam which has become a significant part of her life and she is a member of Reményik School Theatre. She has been doing Ten Sing work under the YMCA in the group Ten Sing Savariae, where they put together shows that include singing, dancing, and theatre elements.*



European youth at ETC Youth Forum © European Theatre Convention.



Top Left: Juri Jaworsky and audience at gameplay *Democrisis* in Braunschweig (Germany) © Junges Staatstheater Braunschweig

Bottom Left: Csaba Kenderes, Judit Németh and Boglárka Nagy-Bakonyi in *Fury Island* (Szombathely/Hungary) © Zsolt Mészáros

Middle: Young audience at gameplay *Democrisis* in Craiova (Romania) © Vlad Dragulescu

Top Right: Pål Fredrik Kvale and audience in classroom play *Plan(et) B* (Karlsruhe/Germany) © Arno Kohlem

Bottom Right: Saskia Petzold in *Democrisis* (Braunschweig/Germany) © Junges Staatstheater Braunschweig

## AUTHORS

**Jules Buchholtz** – *Playwright, Consultant on Democrisis*. Jules Buchholtz lives with her family in Hamburg. She teaches at University and works on scenarios, future studies and human and machine autonomy. Her research focusses on how future realities influence current decision making and how and by what our convictions are driven—especially with regard to acting autonomously.

**Lena Fritschle** – *Dramaturg and Creative Producer*. Lena Fritschle studied theatre, film and media in Vienna and dramaturgy at the Akademie für Darstellende Kunst and the Filmakademie Ludwigsburg. After working with Schauspiel Stuttgart, Junge Deutsche Oper Berlin, Theater Heilbronn and Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe she now works as a freelancer and as deputy artistic director to the THEATER. NATUR – Festival of Performing Arts.

**János Antal Horváth** – *Playwright, Stage Director*. Born in 1993 and graduated from the University of Theatre and Film Arts of Budapest in 2018, Horváth is currently working as a dramaturg in Pesti Magyar Színház. He directed his play *Sombras* in the Royal Academy of Theatre Arts of Madrid. He won the My First Script prize in the Zagreb Film Festival for the feature *On the Quiet* and has received the Örkény István Grant and the Staféta-prize.

**Miriám Kičiňová** – *Dramaturg*. Since 2011, Kičiňová has been a dramaturg at Slovak National Theatre. She studied at the Conservatory in Košice and finished her PHD in 2019 at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, where she is teaching subject analysis of drama texts. She has also worked as a theatre critic and formed part of the jury at Slovak amateur theatre showcases several times.

**Anton Kurt Krause** – *Stage Director, Media Artist*. Krause studied directing at the ADK in Ludwigsburg. Afterwards he spent three years working for the Thalia-Theater in Hamburg. Since 2018 he has been studying the masters programme Spiel & Objekt (Game & Object) at the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch. His work is a mixture between theatre, games and installation. *anne&ich* is his own collective and he has collaborated with *machina eX* or *doublelucky* productions.

**Attila Réthly** – *Stage Director*. Attila Réthly has worked for large theatres in Budapest as well as with companies of small rural cities for nearly 25 years and always strives for genre diversity. In addition to directing great musical entertainment productions, comedies and classical plays (Shakespeare, Chekov, Kleist, Büchner, Goldoni, Moliere etc.), staging European contemporary drama has always been his focus.

**Lasse Scheiba** – *Dramaturg and Theatre Pedagogue*. Lasse Scheiba is a dramaturg, theatre pedagogue and cultural scientist. He studied cultural studies and aesthetic practice at the University of Hildesheim and religion and culture at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Since 2014 he has been working at the Deutsches Theater Berlin, where he realises theatre projects and productions with young people.

**Wieke ten Cate** – *Stage Director*. Wieke ten Cate (1986) is a Dutch theatre director who makes daring and engaging theatre for both youngsters and adults. She brings modern repertoire to the stage, based on journalistic research, developed in close collaboration with writers. From 2016-2020 she was ‘artist in residence’ at the Toneelmakerij, a youth theatre company based in Amsterdam.

## **YOUNG EUROPE III ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE EUROPEAN TEAM**

### **Rage**

**Written & Directed by** Wilke Weermann

**Produced by** Deutsches Theater Berlin/Germany

**In Co-operation with** De Toneelmakerij, Amsterdam/Netherlands and  
Weöres Sándor Színház, Szombathely/Hungary.

**Dramaturgy:** Lasse Scheiba

**Set Design:** Ayfer Ezgi Karataş

**Theatre Pedagogy:** Maura Meyer

**With:** Laura Eichten, Nazim Dario Neumann

### **Fury Island**

**Written by** Attila Lőrinczy

**Directed by** Attila Réthly

**Produced by** Weöres Sándor Színház, Szombathely/Hungary

**In Co-operation with** De Toneelmakerij, Amsterdam/Netherlands  
and Deutsches Theater Berlin/Germany.

**Dramaturgy:** Attila Réthly

**Prompter:** Ágnes Jenei

**Costume Design:** Alexandra Varga

**Set Design:** Attila Réthly, Kamilla Réthly

**Props:** Viktória Takács

**Sound and Light Design:** Ottó Simon, Tibor Németh

**Video and Photography:** Ágnes Kaczmarski, Zsolt Mészáros

**Assistant Director:** Bernát Pados

**Theatre Pedagogy:** Gyöngyi Németh, Andrea Németh

**English Translation:** Anna Lengyel

**With:** Judit Németh, Boglárka Nagy-Bakonyi, Csaba Kenderes

### **Age of Rage**

**Written by** Jibbe Willems

**Directed by** Wieke ten Cate

**Produced by** De Toneelmakerij, Amsterdam/Netherlands

**In Co-operation with** Weöres Sándor Színház, Szombathely/Hungary  
and Deutsches Theater Berlin/Germany.

**Dramaturgy:** Paulien Geerlings

**Set & Costume Design:** Studio Dennis Vanderbroeck

**Music:** Rik Elstgeest (Touki Delphine)

**With:** Frieda Barnhard, Teunie de Brouwer, Belinda van der Stoep,  
Chiem Vreeken

### **Plan(et) B**

**Written by** Stefan Hornbach

**Directed by** Djuna Delker

**Produced by** Junges Staatstheater Karlsruhe/Germany

**In Co-operation with** Pesti Magyar Színház, Budapest/Hungary and  
Slovak National Drama Theatre, Bratislava/Slovakia.

**Dramaturgy:** Lena Fritschle

**Set & Costume Design:** Svenja Kosmalki

**Theatre Pedagogy:** Virginie Bousquet, Pascal Grupe

**With:** Alisa Kunina, Pål Fredrik Kvale, Constantine Petry

(from 24 June 2020)

**Production Management:** Mona vom Dahl

## **Before Tomorrow**

**Written by** Péter Deres & János Horváth

**Directed by** Illés Horváth

**Produced by** Pesti Magyar Színház, Budapest/Hungary

**In Co-operation with** Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe/Germany and Slovak National Drama Theatre, Bratislava/Slovakia.

**Dramaturgy:** János Antal Horváth

**Set & Costume Design:** Anett Gálvölgyi, Márton Miovácz

**Assistant Director:** Andrea Juhász

**Light Design:** Péter Vajda

**Music:** Ákos Zságer-Varga

**Choreography:** Barnabás Horkay

**With:** Antos Gémes, Panka Kovács Eh., Gergely Csiby

## **Strange Things**

**Written by** Alexandra Salmela

**Directed by** Júlia Rázusová

**Produced by** Slovak National Drama Theatre, Bratislava/Slovakia

**In Co-operation with** Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe/Germany and Pesti Magyar Színház, Budapest/Hungary.

**Dramaturgy:** Miriam Kíčiňová

**Set & Costume Design:** Diana Strauszová

**Music:** Jonatan Pastirčák

**Video:** Viktor Petráš, Jaroslav Mackov

**With:** Braňo Mosný

## **Democrisis**

**After a Script by** Jules Buchholtz

**and a Game Design by** Mathias Prinz

**Produced by** Theater Magdeburg/Germany, Junges Staatstheater Braunschweig/Germany and “Marin Sorescu” National Theatre of Craiova/Romania

**Stage Direction (Magdeburg):** Anton Kurt Krause

**Dramaturgy & Project Management (Magdeburg):** Laura Busch

**Set & Costume Design (Magdeburg):** Nadine Hampel

**Theatre Pedagogy (Magdeburg):** Veronika Riedel

**With (Magdeburg):** Anja Signitzer, Isabel Will

**Artistic Concept & Game Management (Braunschweig):** Theresa Meidinger

**Artistic Concept & Dramaturgy (Braunschweig):** Kathrin Simshäuser

**Artistic Concept & Theatre Pedagogy (Braunschweig):** Rike Breier

**Artistic Concept & Assistance (Braunschweig):** Merle Delling

**Set & Costume Design (Braunschweig):** Ruby Heimpel

**With (Braunschweig):** Saskia Petzold, Juri Jaworsky

**Stage Direction (Craiova):** Vlad Dragulescu

**Romanian Translation:** Cosmin Dragoste

**Set & Costume Design (Craiova):** Lia Dogaru

**With (Craiova):** Monica Ardeleanu, Petronela Zurba

## **European Theatre Convention e.V.**

**Executive Director:** Heidi Wiley

**Project Coordinator:** Teresa Pfaud

**Communication Manager:** Joséphine Dusol

**Network and Project Manager:** Hélène Gauthier

**Project and Administrative Officer:** Alice Burrows

## ABOUT ETC

**Founded in 1988**, the European Theatre Convention 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 a socially engaged, inclusive notion of theatre that brings Europe's social, linguistic and cultural heritage to audiences and communities everywhere. As the largest network of public theatres in Europe, it has more than forty European theatre members from twenty-three countries, reflecting the diversity of Europe's vibrant cultural sector.

Youth theatre is a core pillar of ETC's current four year ENGAGE programme, together with digital and participatory theatre. A key aim of ENGAGE is to promote theatre formats which empower larger and more diverse audiences to discover and enjoy theatre. This comprehensive, ground-breaking programme is supported by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

## ETC MEMBERS\*

**ALBANIA** National Theatre of Albania (Tirana) / **AUSTRIA** Schauspielhaus Graz, Landestheater Linz, Volkstheater Wien / **BELGIUM** Théâtre de Liège / **BULGARIA** Theatre and Music Centre Kardjali / **CROATIA** Croatian National Theatre (Zagreb) / **CYPRUS** Cyprus Theatre Organisation THOC (Nicosia) / **CZECH REPUBLIC** Národní divadlo – National Theatre Prague / **FRANCE** CDN Nancy-Lorraine, La Manufacture / **GEORGIA** Kote Marjanishvili State Drama Theatre (Tbilisi), Kutaisi Lado Meskhishvili Professional State Drama Theatre / **GERMANY** Deutsches Theater Berlin, Staatstheater Braunschweig, Theater Dortmund, Staatsschauspiel Dresden, Theater und Orchester Heidelberg, Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, Theater Magdeburg / **HUNGARY** Pesti Magyar Színház (Budapest), Weöres Sándor Színház (Szombathely) / **ITALY** Fondazione Teatro Due (Parma), Teatro Stabile di Torino – National Theatre / **LUXEMBOURG** Escher Theater (Esch-sur-Alzette), Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg / **NETHERLANDS** De Toneelmakerij (Amsterdam) / **NORWAY** Det Norske Teatret (Oslo) / **POLAND** JK Opole Theatre / **PORTUGAL** Teatro Nacional D. Maria II (Lisbon) / **ROMANIA** "Alexandru Davila" Theatre (Pitești), "Marin Sorescu" National Theatre of Craiova, Timisoara National Theatre / **SLOVAKIA** Slovak National Drama Theatre (Bratislava) / **SLOVENIA** Slovensko Narodno Gledališče Nova Gorica / **SWEDEN** Göteborgs Stadsteater / **UNITED KINGDOM** Belarus Free Theatre (London)

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\*Membership as of June 2020

## PARTNERS



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### Young Europe III Partners



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**Digital Theatre – A Casebook (2018)**

**Participatory Theatre – A Casebook (2020)**

**Youth Theatre – A Casebook (2020)**

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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?

*Youth Theatre – A Casebook* is a publication for the creative community of theatre professionals by the European Theatre Convention (ETC), Europe's network of public theatres. It presents reflections and best-practice examples to make theatre with and for young people, through the creation of a new European drama repertory for young audiences. It is based on the three-year international co-production project Young Europe III, an artistic initiative between nine major European theatres under the umbrella of ETC.