

F.I.T.

Theatre FESTIVALS IN TRANSITION

ROUND TABLE IN RIGA:

FESTIVALS AS A TOOL

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

HOMO NOVUS 2005

September 16, 2005, 10:0013:00

At the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia

Participants:

Rose Fenton - moderator of the discussions / independent arts producer, former artistic director of LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre), London, Great Britain

Tilmann Broszat - artistic director of the festival Spielart, initiator of F.I.T., Munich, Germany

Katarzyna Szumska - editor of the F.I.T. web site and printing materials

Priit Raud - artistic director of the festival Baltoscandal, partner of F.I.T., Rakvere, Estonia

Zane Kreicberga - director of the festival Homo Novus, partner of F.I.T., Riga, Latvia

Lolita Cauka - board chairwoman of the Latvian Theatre Union, director of the Baltic Contemporary Drama Festival VIEW

Dzintars Zilgalvis - director of the art projects NOASS and BETANOVUS, partner of the festival Homo Novus

Daniels Pavļuts - State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture

Dace Vilsons - head of the Department of the Cultural Policy of the Ministry of Culture

Ilze Kļaviņa - head of the Theatre Department at the Ministry of Culture

Egons Peršēvics - specialist of Creative Industries at the Ministry of Culture

Ojārs Pētersons - board chairman of the Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia

Ieva Kalniņa - head of the Department of the Cultural Policy at the Cultural Department of the Riga City Council

Sanita Rozenšteina - furniture salon Grīvas mēbeles, supporter of the festival

Antti Hietala - artistic director of Q-teatteri, Helsinki, Finland

Elina Knihtilä, board member of the festival Baltic Circle, board chairwoman of Q-teatteri, Helsinki, Finland

Johanna Hammarberg, editor-in-chief of the net newspaper *Discussing Baltic Circle*, Finland

Anu Valonen, actress, Q-teatteri, Finland

Patrik Pesonius, photographer, Baltic Circle, Finland

Rudolf de Baye - director of the Goethe Institute in Riga

Daina Ostrovskā - manager of the Arts and Science Projects in the British Council

Ginta Tropa - Cultural Adviser of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia

Anniina Hankkio - documentation of the F.I.T. discussion (Festival Baltic Circle, Helsinki, Finland)

Johanna Larosa - information coordinator of the Association THEOREM

FIRST PART LOCAL AND NATIONAL DIMENSION

Rose Fenton:

Big welcome to the first of eight meetings across Europe.

I would like to say a thank to Zane for organising this bringing everybody together and also to the Ministry of Culture.

I would ask everybody to introduce themselves very briefly but first I would like to say a few words about the F.I.T. and why we believe this is an important initiative.

Eight festivals working with contemporary theatre and performance have come together to explore the present role and impact, but also the potential future impact of contemporary performing art festivals in building a new sense of Europe. There are two things that are very important: One is that these festivals are building a network of ideas sharing their experiences and practices, developing professional strategies, working together very actively and exploring new models of collaboration which are involving a whole range of partners across different sectors not just artistic sectors but also the civic, the educational and the governmental sector. We are forging these together which is very important. What are the strategies, how can we work together? Secondly this is very important because the results will be reported back to the European Commission. And as many of you know, the European Union doesn't have a culture policy. But actually, how can we forge the Europe today without having a very clear cultural policy? The work we will be doing in these meetings is important in getting them to think through what the implications are for a cultural policy.

It is great that these meetings are happening largely in the New Europe - in the newly emerging Europe - and we will be beginning here in Latvia. You all around this table are participants in this and your views are very important for us to hear.

What we will be looking today is a festival as a tool which is the title that Zane has chosen. We'll be beginning with a very specific example and looking what are the general ideas of festivals. What are the roles of festivals?

First of all, festivals absolutely exist, for artistic reasons, for visions of artists and their practice and sharing that with the wide public.

They are also a space for specific dialog bringing together people across boundaries, across sectors, across perspectives. In a way they create a common space forged by artists for other people to come and bring their perspectives. Festivals can be seen as experimental zones of sociability. So how can we explore our differences as well as our commonalities through the spaces created by the festivals, locally, nationally and internationally.

This morning we would like to hear from you why you are a part of this festival, what are you looking for through your associating with it, what you are giving, what you are gaining and what are your ideas.

This is all very informal, exchange of views.

I am Rose Fenton, I ran 25 years the LIFT, London International Festival of Theatre. Now I am an independent arts producer and a moderator of all the F.I.T. discussions.

Johanna Larosa:

My name is Johanna Larosa and working for the association THEOREM which has an office now in Riga and previously in Paris.

Rudolf de Baey:

Rudolf de Baey, director of the Goethe Institute. Riga

Sanita Rozenšteina:

Sanita Rozenšteina, the owner of Grīvas Mēbeles, the sponsor of the Homo Novus festival.

Daina Ostrovskā:

Daina Ostrovskā, manager of the Arts and Science Projects in the British Council.

Tilmann Broszat:

My name is Tilmann Broszat, the artistic director of the SPIELART theatre festival in Munich.

Antti Hietala:

My name is Antti Hietala from Finland, not participating in the festival but I'm here to look for the performances in order to maybe invite them to our Baltic Circle festival in Helsinki.

Katarzyna Szumska:

I am Katarzyna Szumska the editor of the F.I.T. web pages and printing materials.

Anniina Hankkio:

I am Anniina Hankkio and working for the Finnish Baltic Circle festival and now working one month in Homo Novus.

Zane Kreicberga:

Actually there is an exchange with the Baltic Circle festival because we are also friends and collaborators with Baltic Circle for a long time and in November one of our colleagues will go and work for the Baltic Circle festival.

Priit Raud:

I am Priit Raud from Tallinn. I'm also a director of the international theatre festival Baltoscandal, that happens in the tiny, tiny town of Rakvere.

Ginta Tropa:

I am Ginta Tropa and a cultural adviser of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia

Ojārs Pētersons:

I am Ojārs Pētersons and I represent the Culture Capital Foundation.

Egons Peršēvics:

I am Egons Peršēvics and working in the Ministry of Culture as a specialist of Creative Industries.

Dace Vilsone:

Dace Vilsone, the Ministry of Culture.

Lolita Cauka:

I am Lolita Cauka and I am the chairperson of the Latvian Association of Theatre Workers and I'm also the director of the Baltic New Drama Festival View.

Ilze Kļaviņa:

Ilze Kļaviņa, the Ministry of Culture, theatre affairs.

Daniel Pavljuts:

I am Daniel Pavljuts and I work for the Ministry of Culture.

Zane Kreicberga:

And I am Zane Kreicberga and I'm the director of the New Theatre Institute of Latvia and one of the festival directors of Homo Novus.

Rose Fenton:

Our starting point is to hear about the visions of Homo Novus from Zane. But first I want to tell something about a South African director Barney Simon. During the dark times of apartheid he worked very strongly with the black community, he fought to give a voice and platform to artists in the apartheid in the South Africa. When apartheid was dismantled he was awarded a prize in recognition of his work through the arts in changing society. In accepting the prize he made the point that he did not believe the role of the arts was to change society but rather to nurture a changing society. And this is important thing. We are living in a changing world where things are happening very fast. How do we navigate our way around this world? How can we open up new perspectives? It is through the arts. I believe very strongly and I believe that many people around this table also believe that we can nurture a change in society through the arts.

Zane Kreicberga:

First we've got still one more participant... (just arrived)

Ieva Kalniņa:

My name is Ieva Kalniņa and I'm the head of the Department of the Cultural Policy at the Cultural Department of the Riga City Council.

Zane Kreicberga:

I want to thank you that we are so many of us around the table. We come from very different perspectives to look at this issue of the festival. Talking about Homo Novus there is already in the title of the festival a notion of something new. And every time we try to rethink what we would like to present as something new this time. That is why the festival is changing from year to year. Especially this year we thought more about the process and not only to present good performances like for the artists to come, show and go away, but to try to keep them more here in Riga and introduce them to local artists and other local people. That's why we run some workshops and that's why we also produce some pieces of very young actors which is of course risky and an experiment. But we find that it is important to take these risks and to go deeper in these processes and try to maybe influence is too strong word but I hope it can at least leave some traces and connections. Also to make local people more open to new experiences and to be inspired by this festival time.

I also wanted to say something about this notion of the festival. Nowadays people apply this notion to very many different events, there can be a beer festival and a music festival and a one-day-show called a festival which is often very misleading. This is why I ask to look under this notion and to see what are the functions, the programs or continuous effects it can bring. The title of the discussion is a festival as a tool, so to whom and for what. There are many levels starting from the local and international artists and this exchange happening in the festivals. Then there is the ordinary audience who usually see this presentational level. But the festival can do very many things through its means. This word somehow attach people. On the one hand it is maybe bad that anything can be a festival but on the other hand it is like this that people react to actions and they are interested to go there.

So the idea is to take Homo Novus as a case study because all of you know something about it. And maybe we come to some general conclusions or questions. To me as an organiser it is interesting just to hear what you think about the festival Homo Novus and what you expect because usually you don't hear these kinds of things.

Rose Fenton:

Festival covers such a wide group of activities and, as Zane said, underneath the tip of the iceberg which are the public performances there are a range of activities going on which are building a foundation for many important things for the future.

Festival can happen because of many stakeholders. I would like to hear from the representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the Culture Capital Foundation why you are supporting this festival, how do you see its role within the cultural landscape in Latvia but also at wider level and what are you hoping to gain from the festival and what are you possibly learning from your involvement.

Daniels Pavljuts:

I would really like to join saying welcome to the Ministry of Culture, Riga and to Homo Novus. As far as I know it is the first time that we seriously discuss this kind of subject with such many policy makers, funding bodies, international art organisers, operators like British Council, which is a thrill for us.

I also agree to what has been said that festivals are very rich and difficult to define. Even more it is dangerous to try to define the notion and the phenomena of a festival in a limited way. We can only try to find general characteristics that are more or less common to all the festivals. Here I agree with what is said about the experimental zone of sociability that festivals as short-time events are a very necessary counterforce to the institutionalised culture which has been privileged. In a sense from the sociological and ecological point of view festivals are an inevitable reaction in a changing arts world. The festivals really become an option, a possibility to explore new things, to mobilize the tension to a particular expression of an artistic creation. I would say it is a snowball effect because it leaves traces as Zane said and it is the accumulative impact. Especially we've seen this in this country.

15 years ago when we were just getting out of the Soviet rule there were basically no festivals and look at the situation now. Homo Novus was one of the groundbreakers that actually defined the notion of festival, at least within the high-quality performing arts. The number of festivals in this country is growing and in the other European countries as well. It has become such an important phenomena that it has started many researches. Its effects are not only to culture but also to economics and regional development etc.

I'd like to note that it is often futile to keep defining divisions of European festivals, speaking of East, West, old, new. Because there will always be personal feelings about these notions. We have always felt that we are not an emerging Europe but a re - emerging Europe and we never left the European cultural sphere in the first place. These kinds of defines are very limited.

Now we have in Latvia this festival industry flourishing. And the reason why the state has been supporting festivals strongly from the Ministry of Culture or from the Culture Capital Foundation is the nurture of change in society indeed. In the countries of the former Soviet block the arts was even more institutionalised than in many other countries. So that was a necessary breakaway impulse to developing the art forms, to develop new stages which Homo Novus did. Many art organisers have been following this in developing new audiences, marketing strategies, new art content and social topics. These all reasons explain why money has been given to it and I'm sure we will be doing exactly the same thing in the future.

There is a limited amount of state money and the number of the festivals is increasing so it means that the search of segmentation of festivals will be inevitable. There are some festivals with major

national importance which is the case with Homo Novus that is firmly embedded in the cultural scene of this country.

Rose Fenton:

In the nature of the work of Homo Novus is the experimental, pioneering work that goes often off the map and this is a difficult area because you get lots of resistance. We in LIFT had also huge problems convincing people that our artistic activities were legitimate in relation to some of the more institutionalised or conventional work. And we need to recognise that it is a long process of education and a battle we are continuing to fight. So your point was interesting about why you value the Homo Novus festival.

Daniels Pavļuts:

I just want to add that I didn't mean in any way to criticise the old traditional forms of art. Opera, ballet, all these things are still needed. This is why we need different festivals, Homo Novus trying hard to find new paths and always keeping up the challenge to themselves, on the other hand festivals like the Riga Opera Festival which is simply a synopsis of what the opera has been doing. There has to be a certain balance with the festivals among themselves and this is why we always try to fund very different festivals.

Rose Fenton:

Because they feed each other. And Tilmann made yesterday a point about your festival in Munich that people are looking for the next generation or new ideas from more experimental work which will perhaps be accepted as the more general or institutionalised work of the future.

Tilmann Broszat:

I see as our main function in Spielart to be this kind of transfer institution, we have young artists from Munich and coming from outside to have this kind of experimental field. People from the opera house or the other institutions of Munich come and have a look at these artists. We have had experiences that two years later they have been established in other institutions.

Ojārs Pētersons:

I am not a specialist so I will say just some words about the Culture Capital Foundation and the principles how we make decisions. The Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia is built to have, in my opinion, the most democratic principles of making decisions in Latvia. The decision making mechanism is formed to be, of course, political but also professional. In fact, the only criteria to get money is quality acknowledged in professional circles. The festival Homo Novus receives this support which is due to the fact that this quality is shown. Also I can't see that in the future Homo Novus would have any big problems in getting this support. Basically all is in the hands of the theatre professionals, also the possible expulsion.

Rose Fenton:

Within all the organisations, how do you see the role of Homo Novus?

Ojārs Pētersons:

Every branch makes their own strategies how to support the projects and decide about the amounts. The support is decided by the opinions in entirety within a collective of specialists. This could still be added that there is paralleled a specific branch that gives money for nationally significant projects and Homo Novus is recognised among these biggest priorities.

Rose Fenton:

It is important to notice that Homo Novus is included in these nationally significant projects even though it in many layers works especially in international levels which clearly are not that far from the national importance.

Daniels Pavljuts:

I want to comment on this Culture Capital Foundation decision making formed by the professionals of each sector that all the projects apply money from their own sectors so that Homo Novus most likely applies money from the theatre and performing arts sector. So the strategic side comes from the fact that these experts making the decision have been there for a long time and formed relations and roles etc. So the strategies exist there in this non-articulated way.

And yet the Culture Capital Foundation law says that the Foundation should act within the framework of the state culture policy because it is the state money. The Ministry has developed a new culture policy document for the next ten years which is now in the proving process and will be discussed also with the Culture Capital Foundation.

Rose Fenton:

And may I ask, because in Britain we always have this big question that when the Arts Council or the DCMS put together their cultural strategy so often the idea of the international one is missed out. Do you have a section within your policy which is looking at the international? We work in international festivals, it is not a question of national boundaries.

Daniels Pavljuts:

We have now added, this is a very new thing to us too, a component of external culture policy. But before we haven't discussed much, on the level of culture policy documents, of how we are actually doing externally outreaching cultural policy in this country. Of course there has been these cultural exchange and collaboration programs and especially with these exceptionally active organisations like British Council, Goethe Institute or the French Culture Centre.

Rose Fenton:

Always the very important cultural player in festivals is the city and its support and involvement. Riga has a slogan „City of Inspiration“, a great line...

Daniels Pavljuts:

Which is the capital of the Land that Sings

Rose Fenton:

How do you, Ieva, see the Homo Novus in relation to the culture policy of Riga? How far you can go and how much further you'd like to go? In London the mayor has suggested that let's involve the schools and the business, it's not only the culture sector but let's embrace the whole city as players in our culture.

Ieva Kalniņa:

After having received the invitation to this discussion I understood I would have to talk about two questions: why the city in general supports the festival, where is the biggest impact of it, and another thing is how to strengthen the mutual involvement.

The reasons for the first question are very concrete: the festival encourages great creative potentials, another thing is that it is a regular event and the third reason is that Homo Novus is an open festival.

We believe that one of the targets of the festival is to promote the creative potential of the local artists. You could think that this audience of local artists is very narrow but we are convinced that the artists living in the city are responsible for the creative potential of the city in general.

The regularity helps to promote the image of the city in an international scale and that is how it brings values to the city. Investments to such a high-quality festival are really paying back. This regularity is important also for popularisation and promoting of local cultural events.

The open form of the festival means that Homo Novus corresponding to local necessities can variate. If there is need for bringing foreign experts here, it can be done, but also to initiate own creative work, if this is needed. In my opinion it is a very effective and mobile instrument.

About this second issue that how the festival and the city can strengthen their mutual involvement, I'd like to think that already the fact that the city is supporting the festival is a sort of sign of recognition of quality. Maybe the cooperation could be developed in a way that the festival would carry out some concrete functions for the city which of course could be supported financially.

Rose Fenton:

In my experience in London every partner would want to make certain demands and there are different opinions about it but there is always the question of sustainability of the festival. I have found when developing a festival that these agendas loaded on the festivals are increasing, you have the artistic, economic, tourist, educational agendas etc. Suddenly you are social engineers. And when applying for support you have to show what is your involvement across socio-economic and cultural divisions because the festival is supported by the taxpayers' money which represent a wide range of the population.. and there should be equal right or access to the festival for all the taxpayers. In principal this is good but the festivals can be loaded with too many different agendas and expectations. I think it is good to make requests to the festival but then to have dialogue and a greater understanding analyses of what is possible and what is not in relations to the Festival's raison d'etre.

Another aspect I want to raise is the role of the festival in exploring the city. How can a festival animate and bring light to other parts of the city, to help people to find new spaces and bring cultural activity there? Homo Novus is locating its activities outside the centre of the city in its peripheries on the other side of the river alongside being in the heart of the city, I would like to hear from Sanita, you are cooperating with Homo Novus by providing it a venue, a furniture store away from the centre, why you decided to be a partner with the Festival in this way and what you are hoping to gain from it?

Sanita Rozenšteina:

In fact me with my husband are a mini-model of the society, because I am always coming to him with crazy ideas and he sees things more from the view of material profit. To get this particular project through to him Homo Novus helped my process a lot with their seriously prepared package.

Grīvas mēbeles provides quality craft from Latvia and the Baltic states and here we saw still one more exercise of quality. This is already the second festival that we support, this year we had a festival of electrical music Forest of Sounds, and this family of nice people we are hoping to increase also in the future. We also have this slogan „Nice things for nice people”.

We don't intend to offer our clients entertainment or campaigns because our policy is different. We want to offer them quality, e.g. sometimes we invite live musicians. This season I wanted to offer them theatre and here we are now.

Our work is quite similar to this round table here around it come artists and financiers. Along the

years I have already succeeded to show my husband that art is profitable. But masses of those people who want to make money think the opposite way. We have succeeded to bring these two things together. The previous festival has also proved that the people who visit these events are nice, humane and calm young people and we like to more or more promote these kinds of events because I think our biggest task is to show that one can relax also in a different way.

One thing is also the fact that earlier the location of our store wasn't that known to people but now all the people who visit these events and taxi drivers already know it. Advertising in this way is much more beautiful than in the normal way. This is why I encourage businessmen to support culture.

Zane Kreicberga:

I want to add that we are really happy for finding such a good cooperation with Grīvas mēbeles. Usually artists feel like beggars when trying to get a sponsorship, especially with private companies, and thinking that we can't really give them anything in return. But this cooperation has been a lot deeper from both sides. Also this is the first time we have a general sponsor, Aizkraukles Banka, which was almost like a surprise that they wanted to support us. I think this is a beginning of completely different kind of cooperation with partners from the private sector that they start to get this wider understanding of why to support cultural events.

Egons Peršēvics:

I want to add that only now in Latvia people are starting to understand that this game is supposed to be mutual. The sponsor is gaining very much from the event, like in this case of Grīvas mēbeles where they are gaining e.g. belongingness to the culture. The people from the culture field should understand this that it is mutual and to go to the sponsors with a financial plan, not only to ask for money but to be able to show that for this and this you will get this and this. We in the Ministry are thinking this kind of development and how to bring it to the culture professionals.

Rose Fenton:

Zane also highlighted this issue yesterday that how important it was for Homo Novus to find a person, a kind of translator that is able to find the common language between the companies and the artists without either of the sides compromising.

Zane Kreicberga:

I think it's important to be educated with these things. This year we got a good guy who had experience in working in an advertising agency, so he knew the language of presentation to the business people.

But I like to stress that although it is important for us to learn and to come closer the business people, but also I think there is a change in minds of people in their sector. They are thinking wider of what art can give them and not only in this very direct way of recognising or advertising. They are smaller ways but they can develop and continue later.

We have had a seminar of audience development but now we are thinking about the next part in which the focus will be on the relationship of arts and business and how to develop audience of art in business circles.

Rose Fenton:

It is true that the prejudices are pretty strong on both sides.

But this refers also to the experimental zone of sociability that these prejudices can be decreased through arts. In LIFT we developed this project where a range of multinational and local companies, alongside public sector organisations, students and artists, used the festival as a

learning process e.g. to walk into other worlds, to understand other perspectives.

Antti Hietala:

I would like say something, I don't want to spoil the party, this was a beautiful story but it is not always as beautiful as this. There are also questions when a theatre or a theatre festival is going to the sponsor business which may move you to a zone where you don't want to be. As long as you want to do your work as independently as possible going into the business world inevitably changes things. All of these changes are not so positive. For us, as a small theatre group in Finland, we get of course the government help but we are all the time pushed and encouraged to get more sponsorships from the private sector.

To a certain point this is positive but when 20-30, even 50% of your annual income comes from these kinds of cooperations, suddenly you are not anymore a theatre but an agency for the companies so that they can feel their part of the art world and we can feel our part of this business world. Maybe we are not so much making performances to the audiences as we wanted in the first place. I see this as a danger although it has many positive things also. This is similar with the festivals if the festival tries to attract as big an audience as possible. We have had these kinds of performances that are made mainly for this purpose and they may not have much meaning to the local people but they have a lot of meaning to festival-visitors. This kind of theatre I don't see very important on the whole

Rose Fenton:

There are really different traditions in different countries. We also in LIFT and in Britain are under the threat of being penalised if we don't demonstrate that we bring money in from a range of sources including the private sector in other words if we do not operate a mixed economy of subsidy and income generated from sponsorship, box office sales, and investment.

There are a huge number of issues here to tackle and I think it is very important that the Culture Ministry is looking into this and not putting too much pressure on the arts organisations. For example commercial companies as sponsors can change their policy and then they pull out at short notice as they don't have the same commitment as the Ministry of Culture or the Arts Council.

Daniels Pavljuts:

There are certain positions also in this country that may make the situation unique. In some arts organisations we still feel that there is too much of this feeling of entitlement, this kind of readiness to get 100 % ground covering forever which is not a good thing after all.

But there has to be a certain balance in how the organisations balance their income and being able to attract sponsors. And e.g. theatres differ from one case to another very much. For instance the City Theatre of Daugavpils has much less chance to attract companies than a major theatre in Riga. Which explains why the inevitable portion of state funding is very different in the two theatres and of course the theatre in Riga might not be happy about this.

The state has to be able to pay for the risk the festival organisers take, the creative risk and the financial risk. At the same time it has to be relevant to the audience and to the founders. And I want to say a big thank to Sanita for what she has been doing, and also to the festival for finding this kind of relevant dialog and exchange and creation of values together. This is something that we are having far too little of, yet, even though it's growing. Seminars like this one you are planning between the arts and the business we really should be thinking about.

On the level of the Ministry we have created a high-profile council for major representatives of the biggest art sponsors like banks and fuel companies. They meet occasionally with the Ministry and discuss these cooperation abilities. This is one way of increasing the profile of sponsorships, which

is very important.

Rose Fenton:

To come back to the starting point which are the artistic issues. I would like to hear from Lolita Cauka and Dzintars Zilgalvis who is the director of the Art Gallery NOASS and BETANOVUS, interdisciplinary project and a partner of the festival, as artistic practitioners and facilitators, where the festival fits in to what you want to achieve in your work?

Lolita Cauka:

At this phase of the festival I must say that I have many questions but very little answers. And that's why I was listening very carefully to get some answers along this meeting.

Not denying the significance and the role of the festival Homo Novus for the whole cultural process and landscape, I've often been confused about the local character of the festival. I thought also about the festival that I am organising, the Baltic Drama Festival, which is a festival where people have similar opinions and views that come together.

I am an actress and working in the National Theatre of Latvia and I very well see what is the interest of the actors of the state theatre to these kinds of festivals and how actively they participate. And this participation in Homo Novus is very minimal. I don't know who is responsible for that, maybe not anybody, maybe both sides, but it shouldn't be this way that we have very interesting guests in Riga but they don't reach their target. What is the target audience of this festival, who is it meant for?

I would like to use this phrase from the gastronomy that the good wine can be judged only by its aftertaste. Also this festival can be determined only by its aftertaste. What does it leave behind, and especially here in Riga?

I am very happy for the fact that our Association of the Theatre Workers which mostly represents more traditional theatre and the New Theatre Institute have found a common dialog. I think that in the future we also have to come together in a round table and discuss these problems.

I wish luck for the festival!

Rose Fenton:

I think it's the same with many of the festivals that are dealing with contemporary performance ; there is this always a tension and a distance with the established. It's almost like we should aspire to overlapping circle. And if we can make these circles overlap more at some points , it's great. A step in the right direction. But it needs a long time.

Ilze Kļaviņa:

I'd like to know how is the situation in different festivals and to describe more the situation of the festival Homo Novus.

I have a feeling that the audience that goes to see the performances of Homo Novus do not go to the institutional repertory theatres. The audience going to the repertory theatres every night feel reluctant to the experimental performances that Homo Novus has. I might be exaggerating a bit but I must say the actors and the directors working in these Latvian repertory theatres don't go to see Homo Novus either.

The festival has tried to solve this problem, e.g. last time the festival produced a stage production to which it invited actors from the repertory theatres and they made a new, ready performance that were offered to the director to take in their repertoire. Eventually this didn't happen.

So my question is, is this a problem? And if it is, how is it solved in other festivals?

Rose Fenton:

I would like to hear from Dzintars because you as a partner of Homo Novus as well as running your own festival are working with crossover-arts and I'm sure that there are other audiences that you are working with.

I do come back to this point of ecology of theatre making. We in the festivals are often seen as a laboratory, supporting the pioneering practice which can become the established practice of the future.

Dzintars Zilgalvis:

Noass was in fact made as an experimental space and the basic idea was to look for new forms of expression. It was difficult enough to establish this in the environment of the city or the society because it demands pretty big resources. This year we had a small experiment with our video festival to which we included all the games which are interesting from the point of view of video art. There was also a project Video Art Plus which means video art plus poetry, plus theatre, plus modern dance, plus cinema, plus music, and all these we tried to combine and present in the city. For me it is difficult to say how it succeeded because I was to a great extent inside the organisation of the process.

We have been cooperating with the New Theatre Institute already for a long time and the Institute has done a great deal educating also our colleagues in the environment of modern art, also organising seminars. So that this cooperation with Homo Novus isn't the first time. They are very near to us and I believe that the modern people are these kinds of renaissance people that are able to do everything in arts.

Rose Fenton:

Interesting to hear about your symbiotic relations. You mentioned the education and seminars which also relates to what Zane said earlier that underneath the tip of the iceberg there is process going on through the festivals and organisations.

I would like to close this first part with the point that was made before about the audiences. Are they divided and is it a problem? How can we bring these people together?

Zane Kreicberga:

I think this is a very important issue about this relationship with the professional field. There is also one very paradoxical and simple reason why they cannot come they are engaged with the repertory system and working in their own performances at the same time. Of course this is not the main thing.

Every year we are thinking a lot about how to do these relations closer. About the audience in general, in last festival in 2003 some very big performances were successful also in the numbers of spectators. E.g. in the big Estonian performance Swan Lake we even had to put more seats. And in average we had the audiences were filled 90 per cent. So there is interest but why there is so little of interest from the theatre people, this is a problem. But I see that the young generation is very open and they are coming also to our seminars and workshops and to guest performances during the year. But it is also a question of interest. When I go to concerts of modern music I don't see directors there either, so it is not only about theatre but also modern art in general. It is about thinking in a contemporary way. But of course I'd like to have more audience also from my professional colleagues.

Ieva Kalniņa:

My first reaction to your comment was that those who love traditional theatre have every evening a possibility to attend to some event but experimental theatre there is only once in a few years.

This is really a problem of directors and theatres where these directors are working if they are not interested in expanding their knowledge about creative experiments and possibilities to develop their own creations.

So I think there isn't point in trying to look fault in Homo Novus climbing to the top of the pyramid of experimental theatre but maybe traditional theatres should also start climbing and of course you have to have more cooperation between the professionals..

Priit Raud:

About the previous theme, we have the same problem in Estonia. But I don't understand what's the rush in getting them to the performances. Why don't we worry about getting workers to theatre? This is also a question about the target group. Do we want to do the festival for the theatre people? I don't think so, I think we want to do it for some other audience. If the theatre people want to come and have time to come, then they'll come.

Another thing is also that in the so called new countries people would much more like to get money from the Culture Capital Foundation and go to Avignon to see the same performance because it's more prestigious for them. When these performances are taken to Riga they don't go. This is the situation very often in Estonia.

SECOND PART INTERNATIONAL / EUROPEAN DIMENSION

Also attending:

Elina Knihtilä, actress, board member of Baltic Circle, Helsinki, and a board chairwoman of Q-teatteri, Helsinki, Finland

Johanna Hammarberg, director, editor-in-chief of the new net newspaper *Discussing Baltic Circle*, Finland

Anu Valonen, actress, Q-teatteri, Finland

Patrik Pesonius, photographer, Baltic Circle, Finland

Rose Fenton:

We are going now to the international part but first let's start from Latvia.

We heard a little bit from the Ministry of Culture about the developing external relationships within the cultural policy in terms of their relationships with such agencies like the Goethe Institute and the British Council. According to my experience these organisations are very keen, they are like foundation stone on what we can develop programs, in terms of financial support, networks, contacts etc.

Ginta Tropa:

I am coming from the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia. My personal history with Homo Novus is very long because I have also worked for it as a volunteer and a participant of this festival.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office is a collaboration organisation between the governments of the Nordic countries. Culture is very essential in this organisation, a kind of corner stone for the Nordic cooperation, because the cooperation in the Nordic countries is strongly based on the common values among these countries. Offices in the Baltic states have been established in the beginning of the 90's. Now there is opened an office also in St. Petersburg. In November we are hoping to have a seminar in Latvia about cooperation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in the Baltic states in the field of culture.

We are not only supporting arts but sometimes also initiating arts projects. We are trying to support the initiatives of local cultural operators especially when it comes to cooperation with the Nordic countries. And we have a specific aspect that the projects we support must have at least two Nordic countries involved. All the bilateral cooperations between Latvia and a separate Nordic country are sort of left for the embassies. Sometimes it is preventing us from supporting very good projects when there is only one Nordic country involved and we are very sorry because not always the geography is depicting the quality or the impact of an event. But then again, this is really provoking multicultural cooperation.

This year it is the first time we are officially supporting Homo Novus. We give support for two artists from the Nordic countries and this is a very interesting and probably not so known field, new circus. These artists are going to lead workshops with local interested people and we are very much looking forward to their improvisation performance of new circus.

In general, we are looking for initiatives of local culture operators, really looking for new ideas, new languages of expression, e.g. this festival of electrical music and projects of contemporary dance.

Rose Fenton:

About these initiatives, do you develop the projects together with arts organisations, or do you create them unilaterally, or are they presented to you as a proposal by the outside arts organisations?

Ginta Tropa:

Both ways, and sometimes it is difficult to separate these things. I am the only person working with culture so I can't do so much on my own. So we are involving local operators and sometimes the initiative comes from them, like it is the case with Homo Novus. But earlier this year we made something on our own when we had a travelling Scandinavian design exhibition with workshops and seminars in which participated local students from many fields.

Rose Fenton:

Is your work mostly focused on contemporary arts or does it include also traditional arts?

Ginta Tropa:

According to our experience, it is very difficult for experimental things to get support. Only now they are starting to be acknowledged. It is much easier to get support for traditional established things, heritage. We are not trying to do the work which should be done by the state institutions but to try to help out with the Nordic experience and transfer this Nordic knowledge.

It is not important only to export recent achievements of one country but also to create this meeting place, to create dialog for people to learn from each other and to make joint projects. And also within one of our projects called Culture Neighbours a person from New Theatre Institute will be able to go to the festival Baltic Circle to have an internship which is also an important thing we are focusing on.

Then about my personal approach to Homo Novus. First I participated in the festival in 1999 as a volunteer guide for two theatre groups and of course I learnt a lot. But then as a student of cultural management I made a survey among the audience attending to Homo Novus. They had to answer in some general questions, also about their leisure time and about advertising of the festival. Representative of the average audience of Homo Novus in 1999 was a working student, female, age between 1925, reading books and attending once a month in performances of New Riga Theatre. Maybe you should do this survey again this year? One more thing that was pointed out in the survey was that Homo Novus has a good visual image, it was well noticed in the urban environment.

When I was working for Homo Novus I was thinking a lot that why do they try so hard to get people out of the theatre buildings and putting them to strange, abandoned spaces, because it costs extra and needs extra effort. But I think these experiments have done a lot for the city and for the inhabitants of Riga because I think that during these 10 years the theatre concept has changed. Before people thought that theatre is a theatre building. Now people consider theatre more as an activity. And making this kind of theatre in a form of festival it gives extra added value for making theatre not only as a performance but also as a meeting place for professionals, audience and just for friends.

Rose Fenton:

This has really opened up during the past years that a festival doesn't mean that I am here representing my country and you represent yours but an arena of cooperation, arena for exchange.

Daina Ostrovskā:

The British Council works in 110 countries and our colleagues in London are providing information and lists of artists for colleagues in different countries. They are also organising showcases, one very excellent showcase is during the Edinburgh Arts Festival where variety, difference and extremes of UK drama are showcased. And it is a good place to go and see what experience could be shared e.g. in Latvia.

The British Council in Latvia works mostly with partnerships which means that we are in a constant dialog with the major organisations and institutions of arts field, Ministry of Culture, theatres, professional organisations... Our main task is to advance, develop and support links between arts professionals. Therefore I wouldn't like to give up with the Latvian actors and directors working in big repertory theatres. As Ginta was saying it's not only about exporting performances or event to a different country but maybe influencing different fields of art and collaboration between artists.

The British Council is increasingly working now within regions, like neighbouring countries. E.g. an international theatre festival is a encouraging example that if you want to showcase the main trend in experimental theatre, you can contact us, and we can work together. We try to plan our work together with the institutions. And this is something we would like to do also with Homo Novus, in the planning stages.

The British Council is also a very bureaucratic organisation and we have a ticking box of impact, sustainability, how we measure it.

One of our previous experiences with Homo Novus was that one of our leading physical theatres came to Homo Novus festival, gave a performance and also workshops. We accepted that actors and students would come to the workshops but it somehow didn't work. So we tried then in a next project that the Theatre Cryptic from Glasgow was working with the Latvian Radio Choir, which was also another experimental way of approaching theatre. This project lasted for three years, it was teamwork, there was a British composer, Latvian choir, technical team was from UK. This was successful and they didn't stop their collaboration. On the following time there was more Latvians in the technical staff and this wasn't considered so successful by the Latvian journalists, but we thought it was good because it encouraged Latvians and British professionals working together.

Then we were looking for partners from Latvian theatres and finally Dailes theatre was happy to host a project about British new writing and to bring in four British young theatre directors to work on four different British new plays which were translated into Latvian and rehearsed as readings. Each of the readings were for audience and the most interesting thing was that the actors and the artistic director of Dailes theatre were not enthusiastic about it, but how it changed! This working with the British directors won the actors and the director and now the theatre is open for collaboration and they are saying to us: give us new plays! So the perspective really changed. And I think that the actor is in the centre of theatre. You can see much new technology and media but when in a play an actor tells about issues from nowadays life and it is a good text, you win the audience. So I think that working with the actors is very essential and this new writing project with Dailes theatre has been the most successful one of British Council

Rose Fenton:

It is really important that the cooperation is started in a very early stage so that everybody feels equal.

Tilman Broszat:

I would like to start by commenting this notion experimental theatre that is used describing this program of the Homo Novus festival and maybe also at all the festivals of the circle, it is not really an accurate word or hasn't been for a while because I can't see any contemporary art not being an

experiment. My impression is, that this word is often used to classify a certain theatre as second class or marginal theatre.

In Munich we have a lot of dramatic, traditional theatre and our theatre festival SPIELART is bringing new kinds of artists working in the city. In our work we are starting with the most simple truth about theatre, the display that here is an actor and there is the audience and that there is a communication between them. This is for me the essential of theatre compared to other forms of the arts, to other medias. Our festival can be regarded as a sort of transfer institution. We are transferring these artists from the city to the outside world, from the outside to the City. We also want to bring transfer between the art genres. We use new, abandoned spaces and try to get local artists reconsider their own work.

At the moment we have a very appropriate structure of funding in this both local and international festival. We are partly funded by a cultural association which is funded partly by the City of Munich, which covers more the local aspect, and partly by the enterprise BMW which as a global player brings in this international aspect. This balance that we talked about in the artistic level, we have it also in the institutional or funding level, one is fighting with the local perspectives and another stressing more the international or exchange level.

When talking about these national international policies, also often comes up this notion cultural identity. For the local cultural authorities it is very important to support local art which is of course important. But how it's often described is that we have to keep our cultural identity. I think there is a danger in it. I come from Germany and we have this history of this danger very obvious so I'm very sensitive of these kinds of descriptions.

To me it is interesting to see what does an artist move for, how does an artist describe his lines of movement through his biography, through countries, through staying at home...

Let's make this model: On one hand there is this power, Ministry of Culture or the state or institution that govern the rules and criteria, and on the other you have the artists, so if this notion of cultural identity tries to put this artist to the centre of the power as if he's a part of this institution, but in fact he's not. According to my experience, the artist is not centric but exocentric, he moves around the borderlines, not only of countries but also of cultural identities. Art is coming up in the borderlines of identities more than in its centre, in the fragmentary world more than in the totality or identity. I think it's important for the politicians to see that artist is not at least not only are representative of national or cultural identity but breaking the borders from time to time. And that's why to me this trans-national art world is at the beginning and it is not an additional construction, like saying that now we are European, now we have to put something on the top of the national level. To me it is a kind of basic way of living. Of course we mark on the papers where the artists are coming from because we live in a concrete world and to get money e.g. from the British Council it's natural to say the artists are from UK but basically it's not in our way of thinking.

About this initiative.. I am working in the festival in Munich, but I'm there let's say only on one foot, I'm operating there, but then I'm time travelling a lot, I'm experiencing a lot of things outside my home city. So I have a rooted leg and a homeless leg. This homelessness is a motivation for me to think about the network of collaboration of festivals or institutions that are working on the same field, to create this network.

Priit Raud:

I have been listening this discussion and I'm taking it in a way from two different perspectives. I am representing two quite different ways of doing things. To F.I.T. I came because I'm an artistic director of the biannual festival Baltoscandal. It is an international festival that started already in 1990 but it has never been in Tallinn, the capital. In the beginning it was a couple of times in one

small town and then it went to even smaller town, Rakvere which has only 13 000 inhabitants. It is a tiny town where basically nothing happens. Only to make a festival in that kind of place and environment is a sort of big task. The festival includes pretty much all you can think of under the name of performance arts, not only traditional theatre. In four days more than 20 groups are performing and starting from next year we will have six stages.

The festival is always taking over the town but at the same time the attendance of the local people to the festival is minimum, although it is getting bigger and bigger. Basically our audience comes from all over but not from Rakvere. At the same time the city of Rakvere is supporting us with a maximum they can. Other sponsors are the Ministry of Culture and the National Endowment of Arts which is similar to your Culture Capital Foundation, and private sponsors.

I am not from Rakvere but from Tallinn so I can see it all from the side. Also the festival is organised mostly by the people from Rakvere. I have found that the more I try to make efforts and to do something special to involve the local audience, the more the local theatre people say that no, we don't want to do that. They don't want to get a mark of getting people to audience while they don't really want to come. I'm the only one to try to push more of the local perspective inside the program.

Of course there is a big discussion inside the town about the big support from the city's side. Taxpayers are of course saying that why are we putting so much money and why not buying new costumes for our folkdance group.

But for these four days of the festival it is the main thing in Estonia, not only within art but really in the news as well. The tendency is that most of the people are talking about the festival and especially those who have never been there. It's prestigious to talk about it.

It is really an international festival. We have four performances from Estonia and they are sort of not existing performances. It is a special program that is called Non-existing Theatre which means that we have asked artists who are not necessarily connected with theatre to make a theatre production, only for the festival. This attracts to the festival many art people and less theatre people. I have also asked two of our main directors to do something for the Non-existing Theatre not as directors but maybe as actors. But they don't want to do that and the main excuse is that I'm not a good actor.

Rose Fenton:

So that the festival is there to develop new ideas but also this prestigious enigma that is attracts media and people. It's good for the image of a person to know what is going on in Baltoscandal.

Priit Raud:

And also the fact that it has existed for many years already so it's easier to talk about it and quite fancy. It is hard to find a person who hasn't heard about it. Also the people who have never been there think that they know what it is.

And we want to provoke, but provoke people to think thoughts they didn't know they were having before. We are not provoking only with the program but also with the way we are showing it. It is a big work to be in Baltoscandal for four days and go to six performances a day, because all the performances are basically the only ones. Then having a discussion and talking in a beer tent and then starting it all over again in the morning. This is provoking people to react to that.

We have three buses coming from Tallinn by which people can come to Rakvere for free. Almost in the central park of Rakvere they can put up a tent. So the festival has this very provoking image. And for this Rakvere has the reputation of a vital, strange small town in the East and they are obviously very happy about.

Rose Fenton:

So I'll try to sum up some of the main themes we have come up with. But this is just a beginning of a process. And we will find mechanisms to feedback all of you so that we can continue this dialogue before the conclusions and report that we will present to the European Union.

To me one of the main issues has been the idea of festivals as transfer institutions,

Also this notion of, let's not say experimental, but in a way contemporary response to the world

The Festival we are dealing with here act as a sort of counterbalance to the institutions not excluding but being a part of a wider ecology,

Acknowledgement that the impact is not only cultural but also economic and regional,

Festivals' role in nurturing change how to strengthen the festival for the future in the relationship to the city?

Funding and partnerships the arts can bring profit and the whole question of sponsorship, but the notion that the state is there to support the artistic risk, however, there has to be a sort of balance and a mixed economy,

Training in terms of exchanges, internships, seminars,

And this question of ticking boxes how do we measure the impact of the arts? This notion of the quantity vs. quality,

Very important is this notion of cultural identity which is absolutely essential for our survival, to acknowledge that it is not a fixed construct and our art is not a representative of some national art but breaking there the borderline, reflecting this shifting and fragmenting nature of the world and an artist has an important role in this,

And then finally this notion of festivals provoking people to think in different ways because festivals and all art can really make us fall out of our normal paths and ways of thinking so that we can see the world with new eyes, many people are there to share that with us, across perspectives.

So this was the beginning of the conversation and it's very important to have continuation. It will be interesting to see how the themes will change and develop And it's possible for you to come to the other discussions also to participate and listen. We would welcome that. Thank you to everybody for your contributions today and thank you once again for hosting us here in the Ministry of Culture.

You can also follow the debate over the coming months on the FIT website, as the results of each discussion will be posted for all to read.