



FestFlash 3 - September 2008

FestFlash on Intercultural Dialogue – Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue brought to life!

In the spotlight

Berliner Festspiele – Arts connecting audiences

“The Berliner Festspiele brings together a seemingly endless variety of arts and culture under one roof” (www.berlinerfestspiele.de) inviting hundreds of thousands of citizens to its activities all around the year: **“Reaching the largest number of people for the promotion of intercultural dialogue is an important goal, as there cannot be any intercultural interaction if the people have no means to get in touch.”** ([The Declaration](#)). In the spirit of the Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue, Berliner Festspiele creates opportunities for artists from all over the world, engages in education and youth programmes, enhances the concept of participation and fosters worldwide cooperation.

In dialogue with...

... Prof. Dr. Joachim Sartorius (Director Berliner Festspiele)

EFA: You describe the Berliner Festspiele as a "universal festival". Is this 'universalism' also reflected in a 'universal approach' to the audience, involving 'all' or 'many' groups in the city of Berlin?

Prof. Dr. Joachim Sartorius (JS): With our seven festivals, Berliner Festspiele indeed is a kind of “universal festival”, interdisciplinary and international – we show theatre and dance, literature, music of all kinds of genres from all over the world and art exhibitions in the Martin-Gropius-Bau – with a strong correlation between the different festivals of course.

We believe that with art, important topics of our living together are disputed in a playful manner. Though each sub-festival has its own audience – and this segregation is (unfortunately) quite strong in Berlin – we link the festivals by focusing on an overall thematic approach and common issues. By referring to each other, the festivals establish a dialogue between the audiences of different arts genres. This also is interculturalism.

EFA: The Berliner Festspiele dedicates a lot of attention to the youth. The EFA Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue encourages the inclusion and participation of young people in order to promote interculturalism. How does your festival reach youths and address them?

JS: Interculturalism to us is strongly connected to cultural education. We attach great importance to the work with young people, but also with young talented professionals. I would like to illustrate this by giving an example: Each year in May, when the 'Theatertreffen' (theater meeting) of German speaking theatre takes place, we invite 40 to 50 young theatre professionals from all over the world to participate in the International Forum. They visit performances, discuss with each other and with German theatre people and work together in workshops. There is a direct exchange about theatre from different points of view from all kinds of cultural backgrounds. To me, it makes sense to shape the intercultural discussion in a very specific and content-related way.

In addition, our educational programmes are very sustainable. Competitions for young people in the fields of music, theatre and literature have created an enormous nationwide activity in schools and generate the interest of young people in general.

EFA: What does intercultural dialogue mean to you in the field of arts and how can intercultural dialogue make a difference?

JS: We hope, of course, that by the involvement with works of art, the way of thinking of people changes in a very intense and sustainable way. This is what happens to me personally: Art raises awareness as well as the ability to judge and allows us to put ourselves into somebody else's shoes. But I have to say, that sometimes a lot emerges from failed dialogue. We developed a literary exchange programme entitled "westöstlicherdiwan" (West-Eastern Divan). There was once an encounter between two authors, who visited each other in Berlin and Beirut respectively for several weeks: Joachim Helfer and Rachid al-Daif. The beginning looked very promising. But later they entered into a fierce quarrel on the different ways of life. However, by becoming the basis of a common book, this dispute emerged as something constructive. If you have look at Berlin you can say that this mutual feeling of 'otherness' exists. It is not easy for us to change this, because our festivals are not necessarily suitable for the mass. But we can show models for how to deal with this otherness. This book is such a model.

The most exciting nights are those ones when there are people, who are not part of our usual audiences but who confront us with their expectations and get enthusiastic about new things. This breaking up of societal barriers by means of art can be a very impressive experience.

EFA: The Literature festival is a unique example of mingling diversity in an open space: do you feel like changing the name of your "International literature festival" into "Intercultural literature festival"?

JS: I would like to reply to this question by giving you some insight into the international literature festival. About 130 authors from all over the world join our festival to present their work. Together with moderators, actors, musicians, intellectuals each year, a whole cosmos of world literature emerges. You can enjoy it best spending day and night at our festival and letting yourself be carried away by one literary world or another. Of course this is about countries, specific traditions, nations. But the "inter" is the crucial aspect; it is the more exciting, the more somebody has created his own specific world. The word "international" is just a word, which means that the festival is a meeting point of a large number of languages, colours, traditions, styles, ways of life from all different corners of the world. Such a change of name would maybe be an interesting experiment. But such a festival would need a totally different concept, because the name "intercultural literature festival" suggests that you do not need to go far away to encounter the other.

Prof. Dr. Joachim Sartorius will write in EFA BOOKS 4 on the responsibilities, impacts and challenges of the Berliner Festspiele in developing intercultural competences.

FestFlash Highlights

Berlin: Literature as means to promote dialogue



From 24 September to 4 October, Berliner Festspiele organises its “[international literature festival berlin](#)”. The focus of this year’s festival is [Africa](#), with an extensive youth programme: In the “[International Children's and Youth Literature](#)” section, activities range from traditional readings and meetings with authors to themed writing, poetry and illustration workshops; from creativity projects in theatres, museums, libraries, schools and other cultural facilities all over Berlin to workshop-discussions for (young) adults. The festival aspires to opening new horizons and challenging young people emotionally, socio-culturally, artistically and through hands-on exercises.

Settembre Musica explores Gypsy cultural heritage



In 2008, [MITO](#) presented its highly intercultural project “[The Gypsies’ Musical Journey](#)”. Thanks to performances by representatives of Gypsy cultures from India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt, Central Europe and Spain the audience discovered the great spectrum of the amazingly rich Gypsy musical expressions...in which the bows, whether they are Turkish, Romanian, Egyptian or Indian, seem to knit a single melody - the melody of a people that to this day continues to allure and fascinate.

Gaudeamus Music Week finishes with plea for intercultural dialogue

13 young composers of contemporary music from eight different countries performed new productions in the course of the International Gaudeamus Music Week. In his concluding speech, Director Henk Heuvelmans underlined the importance of intercultural dialogue for new productions and for the joint development of creative and innovative projects. The festival’s [programme guide](#) also stresses the importance of festivals in the process of European integration.

Medieval Rose Festival focuses on Europe’s common roots



Photo by G. Pastrokos

The [Medieval Festival of Rhodes](#) invited audiences to track back the common roots and relics of the multicultural community of medieval Rhodes through different kinds of arts (dancing, theatre, street performances, music, singing, juggling), exhibitions, traditional crafts demonstration and workshops led by experienced European artists, which take place outdoors and are accessible by everybody. The [festival](#) collaborates with medieval festivals in France, Germany, Sweden and Portugal in order to develop an intercultural dialogue and obtain know how.

Flemish and Walloon festivals commit to intercultural dialogue

On [15 September 2008](#) Flemish and Walloon Festivals, together with Daniël Termont, the Mayor of Ghent, signed the Declaration to engage in intercultural dialogue.

New signing parties

The European Festivals Association invites all arts festivals to sign up the Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue. Read the Open Call [here](#).

About FestFlash

The monthly **FestFlash** brings news about festivals and their activities implemented in the spirit of the [Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue](#).

It is the roadmap to **EFA BOOKS 4** that will be published by the end of 2008. EFA BOOKS 4 showcases most outstanding examples of festivals' work and reflects on the challenges in the context of intercultural dialogue.

More on the Arts Festivals' Declaration's website at www.efa-aef.eu where 25 language versions of the Declaration can be downloaded! To sign up the Declaration, write to info@efa-aef.eu.

The **Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue** is an initiative of the [European Festivals Association](#) in the framework of the [European Year of Intercultural Dialogue](#).

EFA is a member of the [Rainbow Platform on Intercultural Dialogue](#) and collaborates closely with the initiative [A Soul for Europe](#).



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