

Festival Production Management Training

Module I | Antwerp, Belgium | 18 - 21 January 2017

Speech by

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Opening Session of the Festival Production Management Training, Module I

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Dear guests,
Dear partners,
Dear colleagues,

A special welcome to the presenters and to the participants at the Festival Production Management Training here in Antwerp. You find yourselves amongst 15 fellow production managers from 11 countries and expert production managers from world leading festivals such as the Edinburgh International Festival, the Holland Festival and many guest speakers from amongst others Spain, Lebanon, Austria.

I also welcome you in the name of Mr. Darko Brlek, President of The Festival Academy and the European Festivals Association (EFA) and Artistic and General Director of the Ljubljana Festival and Kathrin Deventer, Secretary General of EFA, who regret they cannot be here today, and who asked me to extend their words of welcome to you.

We are delighted to launch this second edition of this new training programme again in collaboration with deSingel International Arts Campus, one of the most important contemporary art centres in Europe. Together, we have prepared an inspiring programme during which you will also meet deSingel team. deSingel provides the perfect setting for the next four days of in-depth exchanges on festivals, on production management but also on the essence of what you are all doing – working with art and artists.

This is the second edition of this type of training programme. We have concluded a pilot in Antwerp and Istanbul last year and many placements in festivals all over the world. The Production Managers training stands next to our other training programmes, the Festival Readings and the successful Atelier for Young Festival Managers, The Festival Academy organises as one of the most important initiatives of the European Festivals Association (EFA).

The Festival Academy has developed this new programme specifically addressing production managers, inspired a lot by the comments and needs articulated by the participants and presenters of the Atelier, by EFA members and by our colleagues in the field of festivals. The dialogues and debates often led to the question: How to present the artists' work in the best possible way to an audience? The role of the production manager is of course crucial to this. Once the artistic programme has been outlined by the festival director, the production manager enters the scene to make these sometimes seemingly impossible ideas happen.

It is not easy to define the function of a production manager in the organisation of a festival. During the development of this training, we were often confronted with different interpretations of this function. In almost every festival the job description is slightly different. And in any case, the work is very personal and strongly linked to the festival's tradition and teams.

Therefore, when we use the title *production manager* in this training programme we know the meaning can be very different from festival to festival, from continent to continent, country to country and even from person to person.

In the previous edition we found out that production managers are 'enablers', 'facilitators' or 'fixers'. And that it is sometimes about 'unlocking the artistic director' and about 'asserting your responsibilities'. And we talked about the enormous diversity of your work. We hope to further define the role of the production manager together with you during these three days.

The approach of this training is very broad. It will give you the opportunity to allow your personal experience to become part of the encounters. One of the benefits at the heart of the Production Managers programme is the contact with colleagues and the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences. The Production Managers training, in this first edition, brings together a diverse group of young professionals: 15 production managers from 11 countries including Belgium, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Thailand.

The Festival Production Management Training is first and foremost about sharing: sharing your ideas, knowledge, and experiences. It is a space where you will confront the views of others with your own. You will learn a lot from the presenters, your colleague festival managers, and the team of deSingel. But also think about what you can offer, what you have to give, what people can learn from you.

You are in a privileged position to be able to exchange with all these people. We are delighted with the group of experts we could invite and who will guide you through the next four days under the coordination of Hugo De Greef. Already present are Roy Luxford, expert in production management who will stay with us for the whole period and Jerry Aerts from deSingel. In the next days we will welcome Annet Lekkerkerker from the Holland Festival and her colleague Han Van Poucke and various guest speakers from all over the world.

Please be reminded that the presenters are here for you, most of them are staying with us for at least two full days; so there are many moments you can address them also informally during breaks and so on. Please don't be afraid to approach them. I would advise you to make the most of it! These are your 4 days, so please if you have any comments, feedback, thoughts, share them with us.

We will see several performances and meet with the artists and their teams. The programme includes performances from Toneelgroep Amsterdam, Maqamat & Le Trio Jourban, Societat Doctor Alonso and Dinara Klinton. You will also be introduced to the rich cultural scene of Antwerp. We will visit places as Troubleyn/ Jan Fabre, Toneelhuis, Matterhorn, Opera/ Ballet van Vlaanderen, Laika, KunstZ, De Studio, Transparant, de Roovers and Monty Kultuurfactory.

Your participation in The Festival Academy will not stop after the four days. After this first module you will take part in Module II, a practical placement in a festival and all these experiences will be brought together in a concluding Module III. But you will also become part of the Alumni network. You will be the first group starting this network of production managers. And you will also join the alumni of the past Ateliers for Young Festival Managers which after 11 Ateliers and a pilot edition of this programme counts 435 festival managers from more than 60 countries and all continents and some 40 mentors amongst its members.

We encourage you, throughout your time with us, to reflect more broadly on the role of festivals in the world today, and how we can continue to sustain them. The main challenge for networks today, and I think this also applies to festivals, is to make clear why networks, both formal and informal, are important at a time when everything is measured in terms of direct revenue and numerical results. The Festival Academy is about human capital and development; it is about taking time off to develop one's own view. To ensure this kind of exchange, reflection and capacity building, the European Festivals Association has set up The Festival Academy.

I am very much looking forward to the coming days with you, together with The Festival Academy team, Laure, Debora and deSingel team, with Jerry Aerts, Iris van Camp and many more who have been great partners in the preparation and production of this training. Lastly, many thanks to the partners of the project and their support, with a special thanks to the EU's Creative Europe programme and the city of Antwerp for their generous support.

The logo for The Festival Academy, featuring the words "THE FESTIVAL ACADEMY" in white, bold, uppercase letters on a green background.

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The Festival Academy is an initiative of the European Festivals Association (EFA)

Host and co-organisers

The logo for deSingel, with "de" in black, "S" in orange, and "ingel" in blue.

Partners

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