

FestFlash on Creativity and Innovation



FESTLAB

An initiative of the
European Festivals Association



Creativity
and Innovation
European Year 2009

Launched at the occasion of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, the FestLab for Creativity and Innovation is established to spotlight the excellence of festivals in the creative and societal process and to give incentives to successfully fulfil the festivals' core mission which still is the artistic one. The FestFlash on Creativity and Innovation follows the mission of the FestLab.

FestFlash 6, November 2009

From Occident to Orient, from Asia to South-America:

Festivals world-wide engage in innovative collaborations fostered by successful intercultural dialogue

Before looking into creative practices and news of festivals from **Occident to Orient, from Asia to South-America**, some news at a glance:

What is the role of **cultural diversity as a basis for creativity and innovation**? The [6th Brussels Debate](#) came to the conclusion: "Cultural diversity broadens our vision and makes us appreciate the different ways of seeing and doing things in other cultures. This openness allows us to select and absorb elements of other cultures, helping to produce new ways of thinking, seeing, imagining and creating."

Food for thought for a new innovation policy in the [policy-making process](#) is also given through e.g. a [manifesto](#) by the Ambassadors of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation; a [position paper](#) by the working group "Creativity/Creation" of the [Access to Culture Platform](#); a [joint statement](#) by the European sectoral social partners 'live performance'; as well as the [EFA statement guiding the mission of the FestLab for Creativity and Innovation](#).

In the most [recent Brussels Debate \(19 November 2009\)](#) [Ruta Prusiviciene, Director Vilnius Festival](#), stressed that "too often arts and culture are not priority in policies." In this regard a real dialogue between the different sectors - arts, culture, business, science, research - is more than needed!

Again, the featured projects in the sixth edition of the **FestFlash on Creativity and Innovation** prove that festivals are excellent platforms to foster intercultural dialogue. But what's more, they are excellent vehicles to exploit the exchange between cultures and stimulate the establishment of innovative collaboration activities.

In the spotlight

Innovative and creative projects are initiated by festivals all over the world. The two major Mexican festivals - Festival Internacional Cervantino and Festival de México - are two excellent examples of development of new and challenging programmes. They are aware that collaborating with festivals from different countries and continents can only be enriching - both for artist and audience!

The [Festival Internacional Cervantino](#) is a multi-artistic festival held in the colonial city of Guanajuato and one of the most dynamic and creative art festivals in Latin America. The programming of the festival includes music, opera, theatre, dance, art exhibitions, literary seminars and film. It tends to balance popular and classical art forms, and offers both traditional and avant-garde performances. Every year, more than 70 different productions and 100 performances are offered in 10 venues by artists coming from some 30 countries. Special productions of opera, theatre and dance are offered, along with new music works.



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The [Festival de México](#) is the most important cultural event in Mexico City and one of the most dynamic and creative art festivals in Latin America. Each year since 1985, the festival organises events that foster connection and reflection in the largest Historic Downtown area on the continent. These events include: Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Children's Activities, Academic Events and Open-Air Events. All are distinguished for their excellence, innovation, diversity and the balance they strike between tradition and the avant-garde.



©Festival de México

Both festivals are perfectly embracing the objectives of the [FestLabPass](#) - given to festivals in the framework of the EFA 2009 flagship project [FestLab for Creativity and Innovation](#) - as they enhance the **mobility of artistic ideas**; provide opportunities for the creation of **new works** exploring **cross-disciplinary, interactive approaches**; and as they take into consideration **intercultural dialogue** as a mean for the promotion of cultural diversity by developing strong cross-border and cross-continental collaboration projects. Read ahead to find out what they did in 2009 and what they envision for 2010!

In dialogue with...

...Lidia Camacho, General Director Festival Internacional Cervantino, and José Wolffer, Director Festival de México

European Festivals Association (EFA): The interdisciplinary Festival Internacional Cervantino and the Festival de México are the most dynamic and creative art festivals in Latin America. What makes the festivals unique?

Lidia Camacho (LC): Every year, the Festival Internacional Cervantino has as special guests a country or region and a state of Mexico. In 2009, we had Quebec and Zacatecas. The City is considered Cultural Heritage by UNESCO - this explains its beauty. The festival has taken place uninterruptedly since 1972 which makes it highly expected by the national and the international community. The public that attends the festival is mainly constituted by young people and every year increases.

José Wolffer (JW): The Festival de México takes place in one of the most dynamic urban areas in the world, and in particular in the oldest and one of them most impressive historical centers (catalogued by UNESCO) on the American continent. This setting provides a fantastic background for an intensive two and a half week programme which includes a wide sampling of the performing arts as well as animation, film, literature, the visual arts, and many activities for children. The festival devotes a large part of its programme to contemporary art forms (as well as including other more traditional expressions) and has positioned itself as a dedicated promoter of new and challenging projects, many produced directly by the festival.

EFA: Mrs Camacho, each year, the Festival Cervantino invites guests of honour - always one region of Mexico and one foreign country/region. In 2009 it was Quebec and Zacatecas. Why do you think internationalisation

LC: This was the need of giving the festival more personality showing the culture of a specific region/country and at the same time to allow them to show the audience their diversity and richness.



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EFA: Mr Wolffer, in 2009, the Festival de México has established a partnership with the Linz-based, very innovative “Ars Electronica Center”. Could you tell us a bit about the collaboration? Why is collaboration with Europe and European festivals important for you?

JW: Ars Electronica is the oldest festival dedicated to electronic art forms and as such has been a trailblazer on a world-wide level. Ars Electronica and the Festival de México have jointly curated an ambitious exhibition which showcases signature works developed by European artists who have opened new avenues of artistic exploration. And it also adds a particular twist: the works will be presented in March of 2010, a year during which Mexico and other Latin American countries celebrate the Bicentennial of their independence. This represents a wonderful opportunity for creating a meaningful dialogue between European artists and their Latin American counterparts, who will be featured as well in the show.

EFA: The installation project “White Shadow” and the animation competition “Animasivo” are great example for your openness towards new art forms and new technologies - which is often still a challenge for the audience. Is it important to ensure a balance between tradition and the avant-garde?

JW: The White Shadow project, developed during March 2009, represented a preview of the larger collaboration with Ars Electronica slated for 2010. I feel that festivals such as the Festival de México need to play a leading role in introducing new art forms and new ways of thinking to the wider public. At the same time, a festival as diverse as this one must also maintain a balance between tradition and innovation; this is clearly expressed each year in our programme, which covers a wide spectrum ranging from opera to alternative rock and animation.



©Festival de México

EFA: The Festival Cervantino also aims to balance new and classical art forms, and offers both traditional and avant-garde performances. Why do you think the creation process offered through a festival is important in terms of the artistic impact on the community in Guanajuato?

LC: The Festival Internacional Cervantino is a forum for constant reflection and analysis of the different artistic proposals. This has allowed the local artists to compare their creations and themselves as artists so they can enrich and update their way of conceiving art. In the same way the audience has become more critical and demanding.

EFA: The Festival Cervantino is often compared with the Edinburgh International Festival, one of the most important and innovative festivals in Europe. In 2010 you are collaborating. Why is the collaboration between festivals on an international level so important and how do you approach this collaboration?

LC: The characteristics of both festivals are very similar. This kind of collaboration represents for us an essential way of the interaction that all festivals should have. We will work with the Edinburgh Festival in some co-productions and advisory in exchanging experiences which will result in mutual benefit for both organisations.

EFA: Mr Wolffer, the Festival de México runs again in March 2010. What is your next approach to stay an innovative trigger for artists in your country?

JW: The festival is now regarded by Mexican artists as one of the prime venues for developing new and exciting projects which reach a wide audience. This is an avenue of programming which we will intensify in the following years, though at the same time we will be careful about maintaining a well-considered balance with expressions brought from abroad. Large-scale foreign productions are of course one of our mainstays, but I feel that we will be especially relevant for the Mexican artistic community insofar as local artists regard us as an adventurous and open-minded partner for developing new proposals.

FestFlash Highlights

Europe meets Asia: European festival directors discuss future collaboration with Asian colleagues



A delegation of the European Festivals Association visited the 11th China Shanghai International Arts Festival ([CSIAF](#)) and Performing Arts Fair (SPAF) that took place from 17 to 22 October 2009. In his speech entitled “[Without arts, no peace, tolerance, creativity and progress](#)”, EFA President Darko Brlek stressed the importance to “build on existing relationships” as the collaboration between European and Asian festivals is “very enriching for both sides.” In his intervention on “Challenge and Tradition Development”, Per Boye Hansen, Director Bergen International Festival, focused on how the Bergen Festival approaches the young generation, enhances the pace of city development and thus becomes an indispensable part of people’s life. [Read ahead!](#)

From Eastern Europe to East Asia: CultureScapes Festival as a bridge between cultures



©CultureScapes Festival

Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, Estonia, Rumania, Turkey, [Azerbaijan \(19 October-6 December\)](#) and China (2010) - each year, the Swiss CULTURESCAPES Festival focuses on a different country. Each year, it questions the self and the other and provides the opportunity for discussion and exchange between the ‘here’ and ‘there’. Embracing music, theatre, literature, visual arts and film, the festival challenges its audience. Director Jurriaan Cooman [stresses](#) that openness arouses curiosity and that art in a way can be seen as a motor for change.

From Southern Europe to South America: Festivals engage in transcontinental collaboration

In 2010, the Spanish Association of Classical Music Festivals (Festclasica), the National Institute of Scenic Arts of the Spanish Ministry of Culture and the Cultural Activities Division of the South American General Secretariat together with South American Festivals and Cultural Institutions launch a [cultural cooperation project](#). The initiative aims at recovering the South American musical heritage, encouraging and staging current music and dance creation, backing relevant artistic groups in both disciplines in South America, Spain and Portugal, supporting young groups and soloists on both sides, the production of musical material and recordings using the best technical means currently available, the free movement of performers and creative artists between participating countries, training courses in the fields of musicology, music interpretation and dance, choreography, and the care of social sectors with special needs.

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Bridging Orient and Occident: the Morgenland Festival in Osnabrück/Germany



©Morgenland Festival Osnabrück

The [Morgenland Festival Osnabrück](#) achieved sustained effects on the cooperation of musicians and artists between the middle-east and the western world. The conference “**Bridging Cultures Through Music**” (22/23 August) brought together festival makers from Baku, Lahore, Teheran, Damascus, Amsterdam, Vienna, Zurich, New York and Osnabrück as well as members of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony, the Goethe Institute, the Cultural Contact Point Germany and representatives of various foundations. The conference resulted in the [development of a cooperation-platform](#) on which prospective projects can be organised.

“Will the future of Western classical music lie outside the West?”: Dutch Chamber Music Meeting discusses globalisation of Western classical music

During the [2009 Dutch Chamber Music Meeting](#) representatives from Istanbul, Damascus, Tehran, Cairo, Baku, Abu Dhabi, Beijing, Shanghai, Tokyo, Johannesburg, Rio de Janeiro and their European colleagues [discussed](#) possible consequences of the empowerment of western classical music in countries and regions outside Europe - a trend which will increasingly confront the European classical music market in the coming decades.

Travelling Europe: ECPNM European Competition for Live-Electronic Music Projects opens doors for young artists



German Alex Nowitz won the 2. ECPNM European Competition for Live-Electronic Music Projects. The winning project will be programmed in festivals in the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal and Italy in 2010. Being part of the FestLab for Creativity and Innovation, the initiative will surely

set trends in future editions! [Read ahead!](#)

Innovative format in Munich: Spielart Festival programmes “Woodstock of Political Thinking”

The fall of the Berlin Wall, “Black Friday,” or the Futuristic Manifest: anniversaries of important political events automatically result in a profusion of publications, symposiums, and (artistic) events that place the events in a historic perspective. The [WOODSTOCK OF POLITICAL THINKING](#) - a “discussion happening” taking place from 20-22 November in Munich - wants to bring political debates back to the public forum. The goal is that the guests will use the freedom of the event's structure to consciously to step away from standardised formats of thinking, lecturing, and presenting, and invent more experimental forms of action and interaction.

How to become a FestLabPass holder

The European Festivals Association invites all arts festivals to sign up to the initiative “FestLab for Creativity and Innovation” and commit to its objective. Read the Open Call [here](#).

About FestFlash and EFA

The **FestFlash on Creativity and Innovation** brings news about festivals and their activities implemented in the spirit of the FestLab for Creativity and Innovation.

The FestFlash follows their activities throughout 2009; a **best practices** reader will be published at the end of 2009 showcasing most outstanding examples of festivals' work and reflects on the challenges in the context of fostering innovative and creative talents.

Latest news and relevant information may be found on the **FestLab** website at www.efa-aef.eu/festlab!

The **FestLab for Creativity and Innovation** is an initiative of the [European Festivals Association](#) in the framework of the [European Year of Creativity and Innovation](#).

The **European Festivals Association (EFA)** is the umbrella organisation for arts festivals across Europe and beyond. Over more than 50 years, EFA has grown into a dynamic network representing more than 100 music, dance, theatre and multidisciplinary festivals, national festivals associations (representing on their behalf more than 1,000 festivals) and cultural organisations from 37 (mainly European) countries. Since 2004, the EFA offices are based in Belgium.

EFA is initiator of the **European House for Culture** (www.efa-aef.eu), contributes to the ‘**Platform for Intercultural Europe**’, is member of the EU Platform on ‘**Access to Culture**’ and collaborates closely with ‘**A Soul for Europe**’.



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