

2010 EFA Conference in Merano/Italy
8 / 9 April 2010, hosted by Meraner Musikwochen

Open The Door
(Accessing the Arts, New Artists, New Audiences)

Draft Programme and Outline

Thursday, 8 April 2010: Welcome and Official Opening at the Stadttheater

- 18.00-18.15 **Welcome**
- 18.15-19.15 **Festivals: Where are we?**
Keynote speech and Discussion
- 19.15-19.45 Piano recital by Fazil Say followed by a reception

Friday, 9 April 2010: Conference

- 10.00-11.00 **Opening** and Introduction
- 11.00-13.00 Break out in **4 parallel speed working groups**
- 1. Open the door for new artists and arts disciplines**
 - 2. Open the door for new audiences through new formats**
 - 3. Open the door through new communication tools**
 - 4. Open the door to politics and a civic debate**
- 13.00-14.30 *Lunch*
- 14.30-16.30 **Continuation Workshops**
- 16.30 **End of Conference**

Saturday, 10 April 2010: Report back

Reporting back from the workshops during General Assembly

Concept

“The voice of Festivals is without parallel; they are the resonance chamber – even the amplifier – of what is going on in our societies. They are also a melting pot, where audiences – even those who otherwise would not go to the theatre, concert hall or cinema – can get a glimpse (and more) of the world's fabulous cultural diversity, thereby opening new horizons.”
(Ján Figel', former European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture, and Youth)

Festivals are platforms where something extraordinary, something unexpected, something new happens:

- Festivals are free **spaces for artists to create new arts and art forms**, to experiment, to try out new things; they are platforms that allow artistic risks, that offer excellence – excellence in the sense of something new, something unseen, something surprising: A free space to develop cross-disciplinary work and present it to the audience!
- Festivals are **spaces for citizens to meet the arts and the artists**, to get inspired, look further, reflect on wider societal issues. In this framework of limited space and time, the public meets the arts in an open, festive, inspiring surrounding - in unexpected moments and places, in new spaces and new forms of environments developed in festivals.
- Festivals are **spaces where through new ways of communication, new artists are discovered**. It is a challenge for festivals to keep pace with new communication tools in order to disseminate the artists' work adequately and reach out to the audiences that have plunged in the spheres of the Internet, new media, Facebook and Twitter long ago.
- Festivals are **spaces of open access, free discussion and reaction, spaces to educate political decision-makers and (business) partners**. They are platforms to engage into broader discussions about the place of arts and culture in society, platforms where - through face-to-face participation - an active citizenship is lived and communicated to political decision-makers. With the help of cultural networks and lobbying initiatives festivals can achieve that policies are revised and that measures are taken which benefit the artist, the cultural practitioner and subsequently – again – society as a whole.

Background of the conference

Opening the door for artists to create and for citizens to discover and participate in the arts has been festivals' main mission since decennia. Yet, today festivals face a major challenge: more than ever, it seems that manifold roles and responsibilities are put on their shoulders. It seems that too often the success of a festival is measured on how much (new) public it generates, how much new audiences it attracts, how many new sponsors it gets, how many restaurants and hotels it benefits, and how much (economic) revenue it brings. Too often this becomes priority number one for festivals and also reason number one for public authorities to support festivals: numbers, facts and figures matter, not the **'real' impact a festival should generate – which is an artistic, a societal, a cultural one!**

Conference Questions

With this challenge in mind, the conference discusses the positive impact and new opportunities for festivals to present new artists and arts to new audiences today!

- How does a festival increase access for artists? Access for people to new artists? Access to festivals?
- How does a festival - through offering new creations, new co-productions, new mixes of arts forms, new artists, new presentation models - create its identity and generate new audiences?
- How can a festival ensure a real dialogue with the artist and with the audience today? How does it ensure the autonomy of artists and at the same time build bridges to a diversity of audiences?
- In how far can new tools of communication not only reach out to new models of participation, but also support the idea of keeping the artistic freedom of creation central?
- What are the effective means to convince policy makers of the need to support artists who in the framework of festivals reach out to society?

Expected outcomes: Ensured by a twofold format

Along these lines, a **keynote speech on 'Festivals: Where are we?'** during the official opening of the 2010 EFA General Assembly is paving the way for a fruitful and stimulating debate. It explores challenges of festivals today: festivals' ability to be a space for artists, to challenge audiences and to offer windows to the world.

Second, **4 practice-oriented workshops** – with inspiring high-level presenters – tackle the role, new models and outcomes of new approaches of festivals under various perspectives. Each workshop will come up with one

- recommendation to festivals: How does the new artist/creation/communication tool impact on the improvement of access to a festival in a local situation (artistically, culturally, politically, in terms of audiences...)?
- recommendation to public authorities: Which measures to take to improve access to festivals?

In conclusion, a **Statement on Festivals** endorsed by all festivals will engage EFA members to increase access to culture through festivals. It will also invite public authorities to take the arts and cultural dimension into full consideration when reflecting upon the integration of European and the world's societies today.

Why EFA organises this conference?

In the context of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and EFA's involvement in the EU platform on Access to Culture, EFA focuses its 2010 conference on various aspects linked to access to festivals. The 2010 EFA Conference puts the artist central of the discussion. In particular with regard to shifting priorities and responsibilities of festivals today, EFA sees a need to enhance a discussion on new access opportunities for and to artists in the framework of festivals. Next to the practical and conceptual agenda discussed during the one-day conference, EFA aims to deliver a strong political statement to public authorities.