

Open Podium: Meet, Greet and Pitch your project - Report

Monday, 22 November 2021 – 17.00 – 19.00 PM GMT, Galway

Facilitated by: Simon Mundy

Notes: Lucie Mentalechta

The powerpoints and/or videos of the following pitches can be found on our dropbox:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/s0yv1sneklrq7ki/AABN9sVALy9woo7puFxWLMa-a?dl=0>

1. Introduction by Simon Mundy

The goal of the presentations of the Open Podium is to find ways of possible collaborations. Each speaker has 5 minutes to pitch their project and 2 minutes of Q&A.

2. Karl Wallace - Arts Council Ireland Welcome

Thanks the EFA team, Colm Croffy and Tom Creed, as well as the Assembly. He highlights the importance of supporting all festivals, from the big international ones to the small scale ones.

The Arts Council has invested 10 to 11 million euros in festivals.

The last couple of years, festivals had had to show great flexibility to respond to the COVID crisis and all the resulting restrictions. If it unclosed festivals vulnerability, it also showed the ingenuity and imagination they developed to create hybrid and/or digital solutions as they had to work with ever-changing public health measures. It has not been easy, as 80% of festivals have limited resources and are mainly voluntarily led.

Karl expresses his thanks to the assembly for their hard work and their commitment, and his eagerness to engage with everyone during the Arts Festivals Summit.

“Festivals are platforms for artists to experiment and dream. They have social, political and economic power in their own locality.”

He concludes by inviting all participants to the Change Makers conference later in November.

3. Natasa Popovic - Ohrid Summer Festival 61st edition

She starts with a reminder of the efforts made by North Macedonia in EU candidacy and underlines 25 years of EFA membership.

“Culture and arts can break any barrier, stereotypes, and overcome differences.”

The Ohrid Summer Festival is the first festival of this type in the Balkans, with 7.000 performances, 50.000 artists from all over the world, and 1 million spectators.

It showed to be quite successful in respecting the COVID measures, and Natasa mentions that she is very proud of the festival team, which managed to send a message of love and peace despite the pandemic. Festivals became a code of respect for culture, and she sees them as divine historical infinity.

4. Danas Skramtai - Vilnius Festival, call to develop an artistic innovative format of Virtual Reality (VR)

The Vilnius Festival is an EFA member for more than 20 years.

The festival mainly showcases classical music, operas, ballets and dance.

The subject of this pitch regards the developments implemented after the lockdown.

Two years before COVID, they developed a “digital concert hall”.

When everything closed, there was a deep need of cultural content elsewhere.

As Vilnius Festival had already started to record performances, they started to stream them in high resolution. This reached a huge audience.

When everything comes back to normal, the festival considers keeping a hybrid format.

They reflected on the phenomena of being in a live performance, which goes beyond the artistic dimension. The feeling of this experience and the special venue for the recording are also important, as it is different from being in a room full of audience.

The festival plans to develop VR experiences, and open the discussion of this very timely topic with interested parties.

5. Lora Tchekorotova - Off the Beaten Path Festival

Off the Beaten Path is a festival for classical chamber music. The fourth edition will be in August 2022. Lora invites the assembly to join.

“The path for creation is long, and full of adventures.”

Lora is involved with local communities and in the renovation of the cultural centre of Kovachevitsa, collecting money from sponsors and locals.

She is also involved in education, and she would like to find European partners to put together ideas. She would like to hear about the ideas of the other festivals representatives, and to start further collaboration. Her festival is located in South-West Bulgaria, but she asserts being happy to collaborate with people from all over Europe.

6. Franco Belletti and Massimo Carli - Ravenna Festival: Dematerialising an Opera: Mascagni's Zanetto live played and streamed from six different cities

They conducted an experiment last year streaming live from six different theatres, having different musicians playing live from different cities. They wondered "Can musicians play together?". They made the experiment using new forms of diffusion, and came out with a positive answer. They explained technically how this was possible.

This is a project, which faces the challenges of the present and future, such as isolation due to the COVID crisis, thanks to new technical advances.

They would be happy to collaborate with festival colleagues if they want to join the adventure.

7. Hester Van der Werff and David Waddell - Culture United: How schools and festivals can work together

They aim at engaging meaningfully and connecting education to cultural action.

The goal of Culture United is to work on bringing cultural heritage into schools through the means of festivals. The pupils are taken to festivals, and the artists that performed are then invited in classrooms in order to exchange with the kids.

Their current activity is to make a toolkit on "Festivals and education", building a relation between schools, parents, and festivals.

8. Peter Florence & Tamar Brüggemann - EFFE Jury members - The European Festivals Forest & EFA & EFFE

They call for "hardcore climate action."

The plan is to grow a European forest to reduce carbon print.

The forest will be planted in Iceland, as its land is now suited to be welcoming a long-term project of reforestation.

A number of festivals have agreed to join the project. It consists of offering the option to donate €1 (or more if wished) when buying a festival ticket to help this project to take place.

After a question from the assembly, it has been made clear that the trees will not be planted in the country of the festival that has signed up, but in Iceland, as it seems to be the best viable location possible with all necessary conditions for this long-term project.

9. Julia Amour - Festivals Edinburgh, Taking Action on Climate Change

Julia Amour expresses the will of opening a dialogue on “trying and failing”. Everyone has tried and failed and it would be interesting to share those stories and the growth they resulted in.

In 2011, Festivals Edinburgh was one the 3 founding actors of the project “Creative Carbon Scotland” re. During the climate strikes of students, they realised that they were only doing baby steps and decided to design a root map for climate action to document the past of the fastest actions instead of following the past of the slowest, to contextualise and learn from the most efficient strategies. Often, it was the smallest festivals doing the more innovative things because it’s easier to experiment on a small scale.

COVID-19 gave them a bit thinking time to do things differently and take advantage of the COOP26 in Glasgow to make shared commitments in this field. There are 3 areas they do not know how to tackle yet, but they would love to work together with other festivals on them: how to reduce carbon footprint of productions of international festivals, how to make audiences think about their choices, and finally how to decarbonise the industry of touring. These conversations can be lead within the EFFE Seal for Festival Cities and Regions.

10. Ian Smith - European Music Council, SHIFT - Shared Initiatives for Training Project

Three major themes are pointed out as points of focus: the inclusion of minorities, climate action and gender equality.

“The arts and culture have the potential to shape a better future.” He advocates a shift towards cultural leaders who want to implement change and pass on knowledge, to have preferably a more inclusive and humanistic approach, that are trained to make sure that inclusion is at the core of everything they do. SHIFT aims to focus on trainings offered by cultural leaders.

11. Inge Ceustermans - The Festival Academy, join the “International Festivals Declare Emergency” campaign

EFA, The Festival Academy and some of the Alumni participated in the Salzburg Global Seminar. Out of the conversations emerged the idea of “International Festivals Declare Emergency”. It is a platform where festivals can declare to take action related to climate change and equity.

There are some solutions implemented within Europe that do not necessarily work in different conditions and locations. The platform will look both at festivals practices but also festivals outreach: audiences, cities and citizens on behavioural change and being leaders in transformative change. The “International Festivals Declare Emergency” will also create a larger body to advocate for policy changes.

A cross-sector expert-group is setting up this action and its criteria and Inge invites the assembly to join the platform to take action and share best practices so that everyone can learn from each other.

12. Tamar Brüggemann - Wonderfeel Festival, invitation to partner on “They have waited long enough”

“They have waited long enough” is a trilogy of songs. The concept comes from Tamar Brüggemann and the performance tells the stories of three mythical women - Medea, Circe and Penelope - but quite differently than the stories we all know. In this piece, they finally get to tell their own story.

The project gathers quality music composed by Annelies Van Parys, Aftab Darvishi and Calliope Tsoupaki and sang by Charlotte Wajnberg, written by Gaea Schoeters, story-telled by Natalie Haynes, and overall, a new gender perspective on famous myths through female voices.

The tour dates are being shown, and all participants are invited to watch, contribute and programme the performance if they are interested.

13. Aleksandra Rudzka-Kurdyś - Katowice JazzArt Festival, think new!

The COVID-19 pandemic motivated Katowice JazzArt Festival to re-think their programme around the following keywords: residences, inclusivity, hybrid forms, green travelling and interdisciplinarity.

The festival has developed a system of artist residencies that aimed at being better for sustainability and at creating bonds in the future between local communities and artists. They opened the dialogue on inclusivity and gender balance, making sure that 50% of their performers are female instrumentalists.

Regarding interdisciplinarity, the lack of possibilities to invite audience motivated them to combine music with urban research. They encourage people to come by train which is a greener way of transport when feasible.

The festival programmed online concerts and discussions, embracing the hybrid forms, and using it to collaborate with remote partners such as for the Extra Sound Jazz Showcase in cooperation with the Ukrainian Institute in August 2021.

Aleksandra invites the audience to discuss the question: “How did you re-think your festival during the pandemic?”

14. Gudrun Heymans, Katie Lowry, Aoife Tunney - Creative Europe Desks Ireland & Belgium: Creative Europe funding opportunities

The representatives of the Creative Europe Desks present their goals, ways of funding culture, and budget allowances for 2021-2027. They explain how to candidate for funds and the selection criteria procedure.

A participant asks what are the launching dates and deadlines for the next calls. Calls usually open up on the fourth quarter of the year, but that now the next call will come out in December/January for the spring deadline.

Another question regards whether non-EU-based festivals could apply, and is given a positive answer: 40 countries participate in the Creative Europe programme, which extends its action outside of the EU.

Somebody asks for a precision regarding groups of artists: is the Arts Mobility Strands for one individual artist or can collectives and groups also apply? Usually, one artist would apply in the name of the group.

15. Kathrin Deventer - EFA Denis de Rougemont Forum and conclusion

Kathrin presents the Denis de Rougemont Forum that will be launched in Yerevan during the Arts Festivals Summit 2022 and EFA's 70-Years-On celebration, taking into account climate change, digitisation and physical experience.

She wraps up of the pitch session by inviting everyone to the Grand Opening of the Summit in the evening, and stresses out that EFA plays a **facilitating role** towards EU professionals such as Perform Europe.