

FROM DIFFERENCE TO DIFFERENCE

The roles of self-image and outside perception in Eastern European Theatre

The developments of European history in the last 30 years are often interpreted as a process of constant integration; as the settling of the former Eastern European countries in Western Europe. This interpretation has to be questioned not only in regard to geo-political and economic aspects but in particular regarding issues of cultural unity and diversity: On the one hand culture is often seen as a connecting, unifying and integrating force. On the other hand, in recent years, initiatives for defining distinct cultures have been used for (re)claiming national autonomy and – in the worst case – superiority.

The panels of this evening will discuss the construction of European identity/ies as well as the impact of theatre as an aesthetic and public practice in the development of a continent which has undergone fundamental changes in the last years, far beyond the binary distinction of “East” and “West”.

Friday, September 29th, 2017 – at 8pm

**International Theatre Institute Germany, Kunstquartier Bethanien,
Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 Berlin**

Free Entrance, please register via passage23@iti-germany.de

PANEL 1

Former East – Former West?

Discussion with:
Marina Davydova
Iulia Popovici
Ana Vujanović

PANEL 2

Theatre in Former Europe

Discussion with:
Senad Halilbasic
Neda Sokolovska
Jan Klata
Marta Górnicka

The discussions will be held in English, hosted by Dorte Lena Eilers and Erik Zielke (Theater der Zeit). Complemented by a selection of video materials, shown in various cinemas in the institute, as well as books and other print media focusing on different forms of theatre in the former East this evening aims to offer insight into today's cultural developments in the countries and regions of Central, Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe.

www.passage23e.iti-germany.de

This event is part of the PASSAGE 23°E project coordinated by the International Theatre Institute Germany. The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.



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The roles of self-image and outside perception in
Eastern European Theatre

Former East – Former West?

Marina Davydova, Iulia Popovici,
Ana Vujanović

When talking about "Eastern Europe" one might think of using this term as a geographical distinction. Obviously it is not a neutral descriptive term but a way of linguistically constructing otherness, homogeneity and identity. The problematic implications of such a perspective on the "East" become clear when taking into account how often the expression "the former Eastern countries" is used, and how rarely its counterpart "the former Western countries". Against this backdrop the last 30 years may be told as the story of how the "West" has been trying to integrate the "East". This is a narrative which not only has to be reflected regarding geopolitical and economic aspects but also in regard to the role of culture. Does it make sense to talk about Western and Eastern European culture when considering that culture escapes the simplicity of dichotomies? The distinction of an Eastern and a Western culture neglects historic hybrids and vivid transfer. On the other hand, it may be crucial for highlighting financial and cultural-political differences. How is it possible to mediate between a "Western gaze" and the acknowledgement of cultural variety when talking about „Eastern Europe“ and to achieve the protection of cultural diversity without supporting homogenization and invoking culture as a means of constructing national superiority?

Theatre in Former Europe

Senad Halilbasic, Neda Sokolovska,
Jan Klata, Marta Górnicka

The last years have changed not only „former Eastern countries“ but a continent as a whole – politically, economically and culturally. Recent developments may indicate that the shape of Europe is uncertain and instead of projecting diversity, political actors in various parts of the continent are calling for the protection of identity and normativity. Can art in this state of uncertainty foster imagination and discussion? What is (or could be) the role of theatre in describing, constructing and reacting to the current situation of Europe? How are artists and their practices affected by a tightening of the political situation in different parts of Europe, in some places culminating in replacements of directors, threats from the public and authorities and ongoing – often violent – demonstrations against theatre productions? Should or can theatre constitute forms of critique or protest? And how can artists protect their work from political appropriation and cultural homogenization?

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