Playwriting in Europe: Mapping Ecosystems and Practices with *Fabulamundi*

By Margherita Laera

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Preface

The journey of Fabulamundi started many years ago. In 2007, with our Rome-based production company, PAV, we started to work with contemporary playwrights, wondering why some of their texts were staged and not others, what stories were being told and what weren't. We began a collaboration with France, where the new writing scene is buoyant, but where only some writers succeed in having their plays staged abroad. We therefore created an exchange programme, called Face à face, to foster theatrical encounters and translations. In 2012, we launched Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe, a collaboration with partners in eighteen countries, most of which are investigated in Margherita Laera's research published here. We remain interested in asking questions about what is being staged and how. We want to listen to the writers, collaborate with them, understand what they need. We want to know what tools are needed for playwriting to flourish, for it to be valued within the production process. We also want to remain open to learning from best practices that we can observe in other countries. This book was born to share practical knowledge and to generate more questions in order to understand how much more needs to be done to make contemporary playwriting a protagonist in everyone's story and bring everyone's stories centre stage in contemporary plays.

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Claudia Di Giacomo, Roberta Scaglione

Part I
At Work with Fabulamundi

I.1 An Archaeology of European Playwriting?

In December 2017, I was browsing the Italian online theatre press, curious to see who had won the Ubu Prizes, the Italian theatre Oscars. Among the winners, a Creative Europe-sponsored network called 'Fabulamundi – Playwriting Europe', whom I had not heard of before, had been awarded the Special Ubu Prize. I was intrigued to investigate further and began reading about their work. Led by a Rome-based theatre production company, PAV, Fabulamundi assembled prestigious theatre venues, festivals and organizations located in Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain. A list of 'twinned partners' in the Netherlands, Iceland, Finland, Slovakia, Portugal, Scotland and Turkey were also involved. With activities scheduled between 2017 and 2020, the network's mission was to promote contemporary dramatists within Europe by supporting translations, stimulating professional development and encouraging exchange across theatre cultures. Their remit perfectly chimed with my academic interests. By then, I had been researching theatre translation for over twelve years in various British higher education institutions. Instinctively, I emailed the project leader, Claudia Di Giacomo, to introduce myself and my work. Over the following months, we established a productive dialogue and a collaboration that, some five years later, have culminated in this book.

The first time I met Fabulamundi partners and writers in person was in April 2018. I had been invited to attend one of Fabulamundi's signature events, a so-called 'MobPro', a 4-day field trip for a small group of Fabulamundi-affiliated playwrights from different countries coming together to meet each other, network with local practitioners, and take part in creative workshops and discussions about theatre. The MobPro was taking place in London, where I have been based since 2005, yet many other MobPros were scheduled to take place in other cities. Ahead of the meeting, Di Giacomo had shared their Creative Europe funding application, which contained details of all proposed initiatives over three years. The document mentioned something called 'Fabulamundi Workbook', a piece of research they had promised to carry out, featuring a collection of insights aimed at supporting the internationalisation of playwrights' careers. The 'Workbook' was to include 'information about different European countries', 'tips from professionals', 'interviews with practitioners', 'country information dossiers', and 'a catalogue of best practices'. The application concluded: 'The Workbook will thus be a powerful, simple and effective tool that will give an up-to-date and practical overview on the dramaturgy context of about fifteen European countries by the end of the project'. Nothing short of ambitious.

A month later, the project partner who was going to carry out that task had dropped out, and I volunteered to do the research myself. I was excited to collaborate with theatre-makers and producers on a practical map for contemporary playwrights wishing to have their work translated and performed across Europe. In 2018, the University of Kent and Fabulamundi agreed to co-fund this research. In September that year, I travelled to Rome to attend the Short Theatre festival, a core Fabulamundi collaborator, and meet all other partners involved who had gathered there for a network summit. As part of the week's activities, I attended talks by high-profile local theatre professionals, I gave a lecture on theatre translation to emerging playwrights, watched several experimental theatre productions, and started to get a sense of the dynamics, discussions and tensions within the project. I was fascinated by the

task of comparing how different theatre systems 'do' playwriting, how they talk about it, articulate its remit, envisage its possibilities and define its limits. I had questions about the values inscribed in this practice by each distinct national ecosystem and wanted to know more about the politics and ethics governing each. Who were the gatekeepers and what official or unofficial norms shaped their actions? How did they determine what could and could not be staged? How did public sphere discourses around cultural value affect playwrights in their work at home and abroad? And how did current debates about equality, diversity and inclusion influence, or were influenced by, work by contemporary dramatists staged in their original language or in translation in any given country?

A year later, in November 2019, when the project had begun in earnest, I returned to Rome to present to Fabulamundi partners my research plans for the 'Fabulamundi Workbook'. Over the course of the following nine months, I worked closely with Fabulamundi partners to carry out our investigations and gather qualitative data. In December 2019, we launched our internet-based questionnaires and extended the deadline to complete them to January 2020. By February 2020, however, the Covid-19 pandemic had reached Italy and was about to reap havoc across Europe and the world. The disruption to the theatre world was immense and unforgiving. I remember the sense of isolation, anxiety and absurdity as I compiled reports based on a set of questions devised before the pandemic, while the theatres were closed, all live productions had been cancelled, and European theatre-makers had seen their livelihoods evaporate overnight, unless permanently employed in state institutions. By Spring 2020, our only hope to continue to make theatre or attend a production was mediated by a screen and a good internet service – what remained of the 'theatre'?

I hadn't anticipated I was going to find myself asking questions about an art form that was no longer being practiced, and about structures and systems that had suddenly become redundant. Unwittingly, this had turned into a research project about retrieving what was no longer there, reconstructing a lost set of traditions, almost like an archaeology of contemporary theatre writing and translation practices. At that point, no one knew whether, let alone when, things would go back to 'normal'. Many in the industry rightly pointed out that 'back to normal' was no longer desirable. The forced and tragic shut down was also a unique opportunity to step back, reflect on our values, identify what was not working and make a change. In my conversations with self-isolating practitioners, I kept being told, 'Things were like this before the pandemic, but who knows what they will be like when and if we are back in a theatre in person'. The theatre was in ruins, and I was trying to describe what it had been like in the past. As a result of this chasm, while we hoped to take a vivid snapshot of the present situation, so much had changed since pre-pandemic times that this book may in fact turn out to paint a relatively obsolete account. As I write this in the autumn of 2021, theatres everywhere in Europe are timidly reopening amid last-minute cancellations.

What is clear is that it's imperative European theatre systems don't automatically return to some pre-pandemic practices, namely their tendency towards racist, misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and ethnocentric ideologies – yet, the pace of change in relation to these entrenched exclusive, biased systems in Europe is slow. It is crucial that every field in society, including theatre in Europe, should prioritise tackling discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender and ability. The research presented in this book demonstrates that most European theatre contexts have only just begun having important conversations about representation and are at different stages in their journeys towards tackling theatre's exclusions, marginalisations and prejudices towards traditionally underserved communities. While an evidence-based, statistically relevant investigation and comparison of the state of

equality and non-discrimination in each European country's theatre and playwriting scene is beyond the scope of this book (see Casini and Sepulchre, 2021), our focus on Fabulamundi partners and their extended networks allow us to paint a picture of the systems and practices that our online respondents and interviewees have observed up until 2020. Rather than positioning itself as an uncritical tribute penned in celebration of Fabulamundi, this book was commissioned by, and written with, Fabulamundi in order to reflect on the network's own and on the field's past challenges, so as to be ready to face the future with a sense of renewed direction and purpose. This book was shaped by its environment, offering a mid-apocalyptic view of what the state of the art had been: it is a map of the past which can be used to steer our journeys and struggles towards better futures.

I.2 Playwriting or Dramaturgy?

Attentive readers will have noticed that one of the paragraphs from the Fabulamundi funding application quoted above stated that the Workbook would provide 'an overview of the dramaturgy context of about fifteen European countries'. So, you may ask, is this book meant to investigate playwriting or dramaturgy – or both? As I reflected on (the ruins of) contemporary practices shaped by different traditions, norms and perceptions in European countries while in lockdown in the UK, it became more and more apparent to me that the English language, its lexicon, phrases, idioms and discourses were going to be insufficient for me to approach the description of playwriting and theatre translation practices. In such different contexts, things are not only named differently, but the world is segmented into concepts that do not necessarily coincide or even map on to one another. And yet, for lack of funds, our survey and interviews were conducted in English and relied on what was a second or third language for the vast majority of respondents. I want to thank them for their patience, good will and collaboration.

While conducting this study, I came across different modes of understanding practice, exemplified by the ways in which language-cultures name the art of writing plays and see the role of the playwright before, during and after rehearsals. The English 'playwriting' translates as 'Dramaturgie' in German; as 'dramaturgie' in Dutch, Czech and French; 'drammaturgia' in Italian; 'dramaturgia' in Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Polish, Romanian, Finnish; and of course, δραματουργια in Greek. Confusingly, the English language also has another term, which is derived from the same Greek root, namely 'dramaturgy', which refers to a concept that differs greatly from what most native speakers of English now mean by 'playwriting', but is close enough to be missed up. The two concepts are not synonyms in current English-language theatre jargon (though I suspect this difference is not something the general English-speaking population appreciates if they have no connection to the theatre). In the English-speaking world, 'playwriting' is the art of writing 'original' plays, whether they are based on a new plot or adapted from an existing source, while dramaturgy is the art of organising and composing stories for performance, either starting from existing texts, or using no texts at all. As Theresa Lang argues, 'dramaturgy' can be defined as 'curating an experience for an audience' (Lang 2017: 7). While a 'dramatist' does the same job as a 'playwright', a 'dramaturg' (a word borrowed from German language and theatre culture) is someone who works with texts for the stage or with the structure of storytelling in performance, often advising a director, but is not necessarily the 'original' author the text being staged. However, in most European languages, both practices, playwriting and dramaturgy, are covered by the term derived from the Greek compound root – *drama*, meaning 'play' and *ourgía*, meaning 'making/creating/moulding'.

There are lots of dramatists, but very few dramaturgs, on British shores: in Britain, the latter's role is often covered by directors. On the other hand, there are many dramaturgs working in continental theatres, especially in the German-speaking and in central European systems, where directors are routinely supported by dramaturgs, often salaried employees of state-funded theatres, who often cover a similar role to what British theatres call literary managers. The fact that most European languages covered in this project use a word formed from the same Greek compound root that does not cover the same concept of the English word 'dramaturgy', despite 'dramaturgy' being an existing English word, generates a lot of misconceptions. That this is the same compound from which 'playwright' was formed (play = *drama*, wright = *ourgos*), generates even more puzzlement.

But aside from single words, there is a larger problem of what phrases, discourses, frameworks and value systems should be adopted in a study such as this, in order to shape a sensible and fair comparison that would avoid unfavourable juxtapositions. Should all playwriting contexts be evaluated through the same assessment criteria and questions? Wouldn't that risk flattening cultural differences? On the other hand, it is important to take sides and declare one's values from the start, as it is never possible to work outside of ideological structures. As an Italian-born, UK-based scholar, I have had to learn and adapt to a completely new language and frames of reference in order to access British academia and operate within its systems; however, instead of becoming entirely assimilated, I have developed advanced code-switching and cultural mediation skills, which have driven my approach to the evaluation of playwriting and translation cultures in this book. As a result, I have adopted a shifting perspective that adapts to each context.

In what follows of Part I, I evaluate my own involvement in the translation of Fabulamundi plays from Italian into English, putting my own values, subjective experiences and intellectual journey under examination. In Part II, I present the Fabulamundi Workbook, which is the result of 18 months of negotiations with partners and experts, resulting in a distinctive set of recommendations for best practices that can be seen as flexible and collaboratively produced. Finally, in Part III, I have curated a series of conversations with writers, directors, critics, agents and funders operating in countries where so-called 'twinned' Fabulamundi partners were based: Iceland, Finland, Bosnia, Netherlands, Portugal and Turkey. These conversations share a focus on debates around equality and inclusion of traditionally marginalised identities but frame the debate through individual perspectives. This plurality of voices appeared the most appropriate for a book trying to capture the wide variety of playwriting practices, perceptions, systems and structures across Europe.

I.3 The Ethics and Politics of Representation

In the autumn of 2018, Di Giacomo asked if I would like to translate two plays from Italian into English as part of Fabulamundi's efforts to promote international circulation of texts. I had translated many plays before, but it was my first time translating into English. I felt anxious but ready, despite English being my second language. The texts were to be promoted by Fabulamundi to international partners, so they needed to be able to give a good sense of the content and writing style, but they did not need to be stage-ready. What struck me about the two plays I had been asked to translate, *Tu es libre* (*You Are Free*) by Francesca Garolla, and *Portrait of Arab Woman Looking at the Sea* by Davide Carnevali, was that they centred interactions between white European characters and characters of colour, or Muslim

characters, within imaginary plotlines. This coincidence prompted me to spend time reflecting on the ethical and political implications of writing (and translating) other people's stories, stories that belong to traditionally minoritized communities. I knew that these texts would have been seen as problematic in the UK: as no member of the community being represented was part of the writing or creative processes, it would have been very easy to misrepresent the other, perpetuate damaging stereotypes, and denying that other of a voice. The two plays by Garolla and Carnevali, on the other hand, had been met with nothing but praise in Italian and continental contexts, where the suggestion that writers' imaginaries should be restricted and plays only written about dramatists' own identities and experiences would have generated boisterous opposition if not downright mockery. The abyss lying between what we could call the dominant Anglo-American and the continental European discourses on the ethics and politics of representation was opening up in front of me. How would I account for such disparate understandings around issues of equality, diversity and inclusion? I will not be able to capture the full extent of this debate here.

Given the short history of Italian colonialism as opposed to the centuries-old trajectories of the English, French, Spanish, Belgian and Portuguese Empires, waves of immigration from Africa, Asia and the Americas to Italy are relatively recent. As a result of this, coupled with the unforgivable gaps in the school curriculum, debates about integration and representation are at an early if not embryonic stage. In my role as Fabulamundi's embedded researcher, I was prompted by the two play translation commissions to investigate the Italian playwriting scene more in depth, in search of the work of dramatists and theatre-makers of Black and Global Majority heritage. I was adamant that if we were going to translate Italian plays into English, we had a responsibility to be as representative as possible. But where were the plays written by Black Italian, Asian Italian or Latinx Italian dramatists, who would be able to represent the voices of second-generation communities from within?

I approached writers, critics, directors and producers to get recommendations, but nearly all responded that they did not know any playwrights in Italy with ethnic backgrounds other than white. While applied theatre with migrants and refugees was often practiced in Italy, the perspective of the so-called 'second-generation' had so far been largely absent from, and ignored by, both fringe and mainstream Italian theatres, despite some early experiments by Teatro delle Albe (see Mauceri and Niccolai, 2016). However, Italy has much better-established diversity within fiction literature, with African Italian and Asian Italian novelists – such as Igiaba Scego, Pap Khouma, Gabriella Kuruvilla, Carla Macoggi, Gabriella Ghermandi, Laila Wadia, Jumpa Lahiri and many more – generating growing academic and reader attention since the late 1990s (see for instance Gnisci, 1998 and 2003; Di Maio, 2009; Carroli, 2009; Hawthorne, 2017; Smythe, 2019). Why was the Italian theatre lagging so far behind? And what could Fabulamundi do to begin to change that?

I.4 Fromaggio or Formaggio? Translating Nalini Vidoolah Mootoosamy's *The Foreigner's Smile*

In the autumn of 2020, with funding I obtained from the Italian Institute of Culture in London, Fabulamundi launched a playwriting competition for Italy-based writers of 'second-generation', extra-European or mixed heritage. The prize for the winner was going to be a translation of the play into English and a week-long play development workshop with UK-based performers and a director. Among the submissions we received, one stood out for its ability to communicate mixed identities through lived experience: *Il sorriso della scimmia,*

by Nalini Vidoolah Mootoosamy. Mootoosamy is a Milan-based writer, theatre-maker and Francophone literature academic of Mauritian heritage, who migrated to Palermo with her family as a child.

The play focuses on the generational clash between a Mauritian couple, who migrated to Italy in their adulthood, and their son, Raoul, who grew up in the 'host' country. While the parents have cleaning jobs, speak Mauritian Creole at home, drink cardamon tea and are devote to Ganesh, the son speaks fluent Italian and is revising for a Roman History exam at the local university. On the one hand, the Father is about to be granted Italian citizenship, though he can hardly read his oath in Italian; on the other, Raoul isn't eligible for an Italian passport yet, and resents being treated like a foreigner in the only country he calls home. In this play, Mootoosamy highlights the paradoxical experience of second-generation migrants, children of those who migrated to Italy but weren't born there, whose lives are condemned to remain in a legal limbo until well into adulthood by an outdated Italian citizenship law.

The action mostly takes place in a single day and revolves around preparations for the Father's citizenship ceremony, which he has finally obtained after seventeen years living and working in Italy. However, the Mother has heard that certain Italian Mayors have denied citizenship to those migrants who were unable to read the oath in correct Italian at the ceremony, and has asked Raoul to help his dad memorise the pronunciation at the last minute. Raoul reluctantly accepts despite having to revise for his university exam, as part of which he is learning about Emperor Caracalla's *Constitutio Antoniniana* – the 212 edict that granted the privilege of Roman citizenship to all male foreigners residing in the Roman Empire, in return for tax money. But while practising, they receive multiple visitors who will further highlight the traumatic experiences migrants have to go through in order to be accepted.

One of the central concerns of the play is with multilingualism and the politics of mixed identities, which Mootoosamy brilliantly captures by alternating comedy with moments of intense lyricism. As native speakers of Mauritian Creole (or Morisien, a French-based creole which also includes words from English and the many Asian and African languages spoken in Mauritius), Mother and Father struggle with Italian pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, but also with Italy's food, culture and people, who treat them like second-class citizens. Raoul, however, blames his parents for failing to integrate or fit in, while simultaneously deriding their language skills, their compliant smiles and their complicity with their own oppression. In so doing, Raoul treats his own family with the same contempt that he has learnt, on his own skin, from the harsh reality of growing up as a Black person in Italy. Rather than rejected outright, the racism he has experienced is redeployed towards his parents, specifically the Father, whom Raoul accuses of living an 'inaccurate' life, and towards his friend Vikram, who has given up his studies. Why can't they seamlessly code-switch, like him, not only in relation to languages, but also with cultural practices? Why does their 'foreignness' stick to their skin like glue? Why can't they shake it off at will and on occasion, after so many years? Beneath Raoul's anger at his Father's overly compliant smile, which he reads as a weakness, lie fundamental and urgent questions about identity-formation and the treatment of foreigners and people of Global Majority heritage in Italy and Europe.

The play features several languages, spoken at different times by different characters using different accents: there's Italian, spoken by two second-generation characters, Raoul and his neighbour Vikram, and of course by Raoul's university classmate Laura, who has come to share her lecture notes ahead of the exam. There's Mauritian Creole, spoken by Mother and Father when they speak to each other (although to ease spectators' comprehension,

Mootoosamy has them switch by convention into standard, grammatically flawless Italian after a few sentences, to signal that they are speaking their own language, and switch back to Creole towards the end of the scene). There are also some hints of Hindi and, crucially, the mixture of Italian and Morisien spoken by Raoul's parents, which we could call 'Morisalian', which is utilised when they speak to the younger generation – Raoul, Vikram and Laura. To illustrate the intricacies of a superdiverse, multilingual life, the play opens with a language class focusing on the pronunciation of the word 'cheese' in Creole and Italian, where the young Raoul is taught to speak Morisien by his parents: 'it's *fromaz*, not *froo-maz*'. Baby Raoul can't pronounce this word correctly, and laughter ensues. Towards the end of the scene, however, as time elapses at fictional speed, it is Raoul who teaches his parents to pronounce Italian: 'it's *for-maggio*, not *fro-maggio. Formaggio!*'. The parents cannot pronounce this word correctly, but rather than finding this funny, Raoul is furious. Has he internalised the prejudice he sees around him?

Throughout, the dialogue banks on the many misunderstandings, misspellings and mispronunciations generated by 'inaccurate' code-switching skills in a multilingual household. Much to the exasperation of Raoul – who keeps telling his dad to drop his Creole and practice his Italian – the tapestry of histories, traditions and cultures expressed in Mootoosamy's script communicates the joys, but also the ruptures and traumas of what Stuart Hall has called 'translated societies', namely those creole societies 'subject to the logic of cultural translation' (Hall, 29). As I read *Il sorriso della scimmia*, I am reminded of Hall's words on translation and creolization, namely the process of superimposition of cultures through colonialism: 'Creolization always entails inequality, hierarchization, issues of domination and subalternity, mastery and servitude, control and resistance […] Translation is an important way of thinking about creolization, because it always retains the trace of those elements which resist translation, which remain left-over, so to speak, in lack or excess, and which constantly then return to trouble any effort to achieve total cultural closure' (ibid.). Mootoosamy's characters are 'creolized', 'translated' characters who cannot rid themselves of their 'left-over', and whose ethnic and linguistic remainder reminds us that no one can achieve 'total cultural closure'.

Encapsulated in Mootoosamy's writing are the troubling challenges of cultural masking that migrants subject themselves to, but also the linguistic and cultural creativity and resilience that these challenges unleash. Smythe observes that the theme of being forced to, or forcing oneself to learn new cultural practices is recurrent in the work of African Italian novelists such as Scego and Macoggi. Smythe writes: 'The theme of learning (and indeed "un-learning") reveals the difficulties of living an unyielding "in-betweenness," and the hardships of constantly failing to meet the colonial and white-supremacist standards of Italian acculturation' (14). While these themes had been voiced in African Italian novels, they have so far not been given enough space on Italian stages.

Faced with the task of translating Mootoosamy's play into English and finding a director who would do justice to the material, I was guided by a desire to share the responsibilities with artists who would have lived experiences of the subject matter. Italian-Palestinian director Omar Elerian, who also saw his father acquire Italian citizenship as a child, and who had been based in London for the past decade, accepted our invitation. Later, Mootoosamy and I worked together on a first draft of the translation, which Elerian revised ahead of a week-long workshop with British-Mauritian actors on Zoom. Given that Black British theatre is now established in Britain and authors have moved beyond representing the harsh struggles of first-generation migrant families, Elerian and I wondered how the cast would relate to

Raoul's frustration with his parents, and his use of racist tropes. We wondered whether the cast would question keeping the action in Italy, and whether it would make sense to adapt it into a British setting and context. The image of the smiling monkey hurled by Raoul towards his Father and Vikram, which can also be found in the original title, was felt to be too provocative for a British context, with potentials to be misunderstood, hence our translation of the title as *The Foreigner's Smile*.

On 21 June 2021, cast and creatives gathered in a virtual room to start testing the play and its translation into English. We began with a read through and discussed initial reactions to the story. The British-Mauritian actors shared their personal connections with the characters, their way of speaking, their cultural mannerisms, their attitudes and feelings. We spoke of the different histories of migration to the UK and to Italy, compared the British and Italian brands of colonialism, and discussed attitudes towards migrants and ethnic diversity, and citizenship laws in the two contexts. The actors spoke of their connection to Mauritius and of being perceived by both Mauritian and British communities as not quite entitled to full membership. None of the actors had ever performed in a play by a Mauritian author and were excited at the opportunity to embody Mauritian characters. But when we began to tackle the lines in the play where the characters spoke Morisien, our cast turned out to be ill-equipped: all had heard Creole being spoken by parents, grandparents, relatives and friends in Mauritius, but had not learnt it as a primary or secondary language, so found it hard to read, understand and pronounce it. While Mootoosamy's Father and Mother speak what I have called 'Morisalian' – an Italian heavily infused with Creole, characterised by a persistent 'left-over' of Creole structures, with Creole pronunciation and Creole-derived grammatical inconsistencies – our British-Mauritian actors reversed the linguistic power imbalance towards English, their native language, instead finding it difficult to pronounce French-infused Morisien. This created a paradoxical yet quite powerful disconnect between their characters and our attempt to be 'authentic' in our casting.

On the second day, we started with a lesson in Mauritian Creole pronunciation. Mootoosamy acted as a dialect coach for the cast and translated the lines for them, while I transcribed Morisien into English-type spelling for the actors. It was like seeing the language class at beginning of the play, but this time it was happening for real, live on our screens. We hadn't anticipated the complications that we would have to face given the added layer of mispronunciation of Creole by the British cast. Because the play revolves around linguistic competence and its crucial role in the construction of identity, the translation into English and our cast's inability to code-switch – superimposed to the characters' distinctive language skills – had complicated matters. In the translated version, it was harder to keep track of what was genuine mispronunciation, but was meant to be pronounced in the standard way, and what was meant to be mispronounced, but couldn't because the actor had first-language skills. On the third day, however, we made the decision to push even further with the multilingual extravaganza by reintegrating some Italian into the text, in particular the citizenship oath that Raoul is trying to teach his Father. It made sense to keep this aspect of the play culture-specific and to highlight what Mootoosamy was keen to stress, namely that Italian citizenship must be acquired by demonstrating and performing standard Italian pronunciation. The language classes continued until we presented the reading on 25 June 2021 to an online audience, hoping this play may find its way to a much broader live audience one day, whether in Britain, in Italy or anywhere else in the world.

What this experience highlighted for me, once again, was the utterly crucial importance of translating contemporary plays and staging them in new contexts for audiences to see

themselves reflected in global stories with intense local resonances. Cultural competence and humility can be learnt by watching the stories of others unfold on stage and appreciating perspectives other than our own. Even more importantly, a radically inclusive Europe can only be reached if cultural and artistic output reflects the diversity of our societies. Creating these invaluable opportunities for cultural and linguistic exchange and growth is what Fabulamundi is all about.

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Part II
Fabulamundi Workbook: A Report on Contemporary Playwriting and Theatre Translation in Europe

II.1 Introduction

This report assesses current practices, perceptions and norms in the field of contemporary playwriting and the translation of contemporary plays in nine of the countries where Fabulamundi partners are based: Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and the UK Mapping different national ecologies, structures and traditions enabling the production and mobility of plays through the use of questionnaires and one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders within Fabulamundi partners' extended network, the report presents qualitative and quantitative data gathered on how each theatre culture supports living dramatists, how it organises its education system, what conventions and values drive the production and translation of contemporary plays and what perceptions are held by gatekeepers, theatre-makers and other cultural operators about the theatre system in which they work. Drawing on the expertise of artistic directors, venues managers, playwrights, translators, directors, performers and critics working with Fabulamundi, I evaluate and compare cultural practices and institutional habits in the field, and conclude with a list of best practices for a sustainable field.

The complex and historically layered ecologies of contemporary European theatre practices – shaped by such factors as economic and social conditions, ideological discourses, taste and other professional conventions – informed local performance cultures abiding by very different written and non-written rules. While a large number of academics within Theatre Studies have focused on national contexts within Europe, there is little research being carried out in English that programmatically approaches contemporary continental practices from a supranational perspective (see European-wide studies such as Delgado, Lease and Rebellato, eds; Delgado, Lease and Rebellato, eds; Ridout and Kelleher, eds; and Mancewicz and Remshardt, eds). There is also very little qualitative research being undertaken around contemporary theatre practices – at least in English – and even less qualitative research that aims to compare theatre cultures and traditions in Europe. Moreover, to my knowledge, an assessment of different attitudes towards, and approaches to, the translation of plays in Europe has never been attempted. As a result, resources for those wishing to navigate theatre systems across European borders are few and far between. The recent study by Casini and Sepulchre (2021) commissioned by the European Theatre Convention (ETC), is a welcome contribution in this regard, but focuses mainly on employment data and programming in ETC member organisations, rather than practices, attitudes and perceptions, like the Fabulamundi Workbook.

The present report addresses a gap in research by focusing on contemporary playwriting and the staging of contemporary plays in their original language or in translation in Europe, taking nine countries as case studies. For the purposes of this study, I define contemporary playwriting as inclusive of both plays by living authors and plays written in the past 20–30 years. However, the focus has been on the systems and practical conventions that shape the careers of living theatre writers in each country. Driven by the desire to map and evaluate different structures and norms in support of intercultural understanding, exchange and cooperation, the report is both aimed at, and draws from the expertise of, scholars, critics,

theatre-makers, translators, dramaturgs, literary managers and producers based in these countries.

This report was commissioned by Fabulamundi partners and compiled between June 2019 and December 2020. The knowledge, expertise and opinions presented in this report emerge from my conversations with Fabulamundi partners and their network of collaborators. I want to acknowledge the crucial support of my commissioners and the generosity of those who offered their time and expertise to the project. I also want to thank the project's Research Assistant, Lianna Mark, for her work in the initial data gathering and analysis stage. A first version of this report was published in *Critical Stages/Scènes Critiques* 21 in December 2020.

The report presented here, nicknamed 'Fabulamundi Workbook', was conceived to empower Europe-based playwrights, playwriting institutions and organisations with concrete knowledge gathered from experts in playwriting and theatre translation practice in order to facilitate learning about and from one another. My aim was to present a comparative evaluation of qualitative and quantitative findings for every country.

II.2 Structure and Research Questions

It is important to stress that this report is based on qualitative data, that is, on the knowledge, perceptions and opinions offered by the experts who took part in this study, and whose identity we have kept anonymous for confidentiality, privacy and data protection reasons. Despite our efforts to be representative and speaking to a variety of different voices, the findings on each country should be taken as a snapshot of what the experts we talked to have shared, rather than as statistically representative data.

The study is structured around eight national reports: one for each country, with Austria and Germany in a single report. Each national report features four key areas:

1. Key players. We asked our respondents to name the most prestigious and influential venues and festivals working in their country to offer a map of their perceptions. For lack of space, we have had to limit the number of institutions we can present in this report to the few most consistently mentioned.

2. Systems and practical conventions. Contemporary playwriting and theatre translation culture is constituted by a system of interconnected practices in the theatre industry, as well as in arts funding, gatekeeping structures, commissioning and income opportunities, levels of exchange with other media, education, press, publishing, audience interest/taste and value systems, including attitudes to equality, diversity and inclusion. Conventions and norms in each of these areas will have an effect on other areas of the system.

3. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This area deserves particular attention in that debates and attitudes in relation to the ethics of theatre practice are at very different stages in each European country. In all cases, this report acknowledges that the road towards full equality and inclusivity for all marginalised voices is still long and bumpy. As a result of cultural and ideological difference brought about by local public sphere discourses, what can seem possible, normal, natural or funny in one country may be perceived as impossible, strange, derogatory and offensive in another. Knowing where debates stand in each country

can be very useful, in particular for artists identifying as members of oppressed minorities in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, gender or ability, in order to evaluate the risk of engagement with a different country's system.

Our key questions in this strand were a) What perceptions do theatre professionals hold around the state of equality, diversity and inclusion debates in each context? and b) What evidence of equality, diversity and inclusion (or lack thereof) can be identified in each context? For the former, our qualitative data obtained through interviews and surveys included questions covering: 1) perceptions around whether marginalised identities have equal opportunities; 2) knowledge of state regulation/funding to incentivise inclusion in theatres; and 3) familiarity with activist campaigns and organisations monitoring progress. While is not be possible to share a breakdown of specific self-identification data on sex, gender, ethnicity and ability of those who responded to our questionnaires, given the low numbers of responses and my duty to protect anonymity, it will suffice to say that the vast majority of those who took part in our online questionnaire, which was distributed by Fabulamundi partners among their network of collaborators, self-identified as white, heterosexual, cisgender and able-bodied people and declared to have no religion. The split between men and women was roughly equal, but many respondents preferred not to state their sex.

For the second research question (b) on EDI, I drew data from existing specialised academic and activist organisation reports on minority rights, non-discrimination and gender equality. As this section is meant to contribute to the eradication of discriminatory practices towards traditionally marginalised constituencies, it appeared insufficient to only present qualitative data gathered through this research project, which is based on a limited number of responses and often presents a mismatch between the respondent's own perceptions and the actual situation on the ground. I therefore present both data from our Fabulamundi questionnaires and interviews, and generic data on each country that is available through other academic studies.

4. Advice for foreign playwrights. In the last section, local respondents provided short but specific advice for foreign playwrights wishing to have their plays staged in that country. Some of the most useful (and sometimes playful) suggestions have been included.

II.3 Methodology

The project employed research methods borrowed from social sciences and theoretical underpinnings from theatre studies, as well as practical knowledge of theatre-making, playwriting and theatre translation. Each survey respondent and interviewee who took part in the study gave us informed consent to use their responses, quote their words anonymously, and share anonymised personal data where relevant. This study's design was approved by the University of Kent's Ethics Committee on November 16, 2019 (Ref: 0221920).

The research process was carried out in stages as follows:

- January 2020. Questionnaires. An internet-based survey consisting of around sixty questions was devised to gather an initial set of mixed qualitative and quantitative data. All Fabulamundi partners sent the link of our survey to playwrights, directors, actors, translators, artistic directors, critics, academics and other theatre professionals in their network. The link was also disseminated on the Fabulamindi website and on

social media. An average of 22.6 responses per country were received, for a total of 204 responses (see **Tables 1–5 for data on our survey respondents**).

- February 2020. Interim national reports. Once the online questionnaires were returned, interim reports for each country were compiled with information gathered from respondents. The interim reports were shared with Fabulamundi partners and updated with their written and verbal feedback.
- March 2020. Follow-up semi-structured interviews. The updated interim reports were shared with three additional experts per country (literary managers, playwrights, directors, critics, translators and so on), who were recruited via partners' networks and through my own network. I carried out semi-structured interviews with experts over phone or video conferencing during the lockdown stage of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The interim reports were edited again following conversations with these experts.
- April 2020. Additional interviews. Additional qualitative interviews on key project research questions were carried out via video conferencing with a selection of writers by the project's Research Assistant, Lianna Mark.
- May–June 2020. Final national reports. A final version of the reports was redrafted to incorporate more qualitative and quantitative data and include complexity through quotations of interviewees' anonymised comments.
- June–July 2020. Peer review of Fabulamundi Workbook. The revised national reports were edited down to half their length into 'national summaries,' published below, and collated into a single paper nicknamed Fabulamundi Workbook. The Workbook was sent out to three academic peer reviewers specialising in European theatre and to in-house editors at *Critical Stages*. Their feedback informed final revisions. The qualitative data and evidence upon which the below national summaries are based is mostly unpublished and will not be shared with third parties in order to comply with privacy and data protection regulation.

[add Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 here]

II.4 Executive Summary

This study compared systems, conventions and perceptions around contemporary playwriting and theatre translation in Austria and Germany; Czech Republic; France; Italy; Poland; Romania; Spain; and the UK. The study's key findings can be summarised as follows:

1. **Confidence that contemporary plays in the local language(s) are valued fluctuates widely.** The country with the highest levels of confidence that venues, theatre-makers and audiences value new plays written in the local language is the UK, followed by Spain and Poland. The country with the lowest confidence is Romania, followed by Italy and Austria. Confidence was measured via a combination of two survey questions, which asked experts in each country to evaluate whether venues 'regularly' programme contemporary plays in the local language, and whether theatre-makers and audiences are 'interested' in contemporary plays.

2. **Confidence that contemporary plays in translation are valued fluctuates even more widely.** The country with the highest confidence that venues, theatre-makers and audiences value new plays in translation is Spain, followed by Romania and Poland. The country with the lowest confidence is Austria, followed by the UK and Italy. This was

measured via a combination of two survey questions, which asked experts in each country to evaluate whether venues 'regularly' programme contemporary plays in translation, and whether theatre-makers and audiences are 'interested' in contemporary plays in translation.

3. **Playwrights' income opportunities are uneven**. It was difficult to establish a meaningful comparison between playwright fee levels because of the differences in commissioning and licencing practices. However, taking into account both commissioning fees (where these are customary), fees offered for existing plays (where these are offered) and copyright percentages, we found that the countries where playwrights can hope to earn more from writing plays were the UK and Germany, followed at some distance by Spain and France. The country where playwrights' earnings are lowest is Romania, followed by the Czech Republic and Poland. In some countries, however, like Poland, Romania, Spain and Italy, it is common for a playwright to receive no advance fee for writing a play that is put on stage, and only be paid through a percentage of gross box office intake when the play is staged. This practice is unsustainable because it forces playwrights to either take on major financial risks, or give up.

4. **Translators' income opportunities are even more uneven.** It is difficult to establish a meaningful comparison between theatre translator fee levels in each country because these wary widely even within the same country. In general, taking into account fee levels and copyright percentages, Germany and the UK tend to be where translators can hope to earn the most, even though in the UK there is a lack of opportunity for translators. The country with the lowest translator fees is Romania, followed by the Czech Republic, Poland and Italy.

5. **Confidence in, and awareness of, the state of equality, diversity and inclusion within the playwriting scene differ significantly across countries**. It was beyond the scope of this study to attempt objectively to measure the state of equality, diversity and inclusion in each theatre ecosystem. Instead, the data we were able to capture was a snapshot of respondents' perceptions. The countries where the biggest percentage of respondents thought living women playwrights had equal opportunities were the Czech Republic and Romania, where 70% and 77.4% of respondents respectively thought women playwrights had equal opportunities, however they were ranked 21st and 25th respectively in Europe in the Gender Equality Index. The countries where the biggest percentage of respondents thought living LGBTQ playwrights had equal opportunities were the Czech Republic and Italy, where 85% and 67.7% of respondents respectively thought that LGBTQ playwrights had equal opportunities, yet both countries were below the European average in the IGLA country ranking, at 33rd and 35th place respectively. The countries where the biggest percentage of respondents thought living playwrights of minority heritage had equal opportunities were Germany and Poland, where 40.7% and 35% respectively thought they had equal opportunities. The countries where the biggest percentage of respondents thought living disabled playwrights had equal opportunities were the Czech Republic and Germany, where 40% and 40.7% of respondents respectively thought that disabled playwrights had equal opportunities in their countries. Overall, it appears that respondents in the Czech Republic were the most confident/least aware about the state of equality in their country's playwriting scene, while the countries where our respondents were least confident/most aware about the state of equality in their playwriting scene were the UK and Spain. (See **Table 6** for more details on responses by country)

[add Table 6 here]

6. **Distinctive traditions shape national practices in the field.** Contemporary playwriting and theatre translation cultures in Europe are characterised by distinctive traditions that inform practices, perceptions and value systems. Below are some of the key aspects that inform conventions in the field:

    - **Playwriting as a distinct subject in HE/Drama schools**. In many countries, playwriting or writing for performance is taught as a distinct subject in Universities or Drama schools (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK). In others, dramaturgy, devising and directing are taught in ways that engage with text production and editing, but the art of writing plays itself can only be learned in informal settings or is considered a skill that can be acquired independently by writers (Czech Republic, Poland, Romania).

    - **Playwrights learning alongside actors**. Some training contexts tend to assume that writers, directors and actors need to learn the foundations of theatre practice together and then specialise in writing for the stage (Italy, Spain, France). Other traditions tend to expect writers to only learn alongside other writers (Austria, Germany). The UK offers both options.

    - **Dramaturgy/literary departments**. Countries can be split between those that rely on the expertise of dramaturgs and literary managers – employed by venues or companies – and those that do not envisage this particular position. Even if many differences exist between the traditional German notion of dramaturg (who is considered part of the artistic team, and who is often a playwright too) and the traditional British figure of the Literary Manager (who considered part of the management team, and who is seldom a writer), the big dividing line is between those countries that conceive of such an intermediary role between the artistic directorship and playwrights (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, UK), and those that function mostly without such a role (France, Italy, Romania, Spain).

    - **Commissioning.** The concept of 'commissioning' is understood differently across Europe. Broadly speaking, in most countries where dramaturgy/literary departments exist, venues have a solid tradition of approaching writers to request that they write new plays specifically for them for a fee, effectively trusting the writer on the basis of their track record and accepting a degree of risk (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, UK). In others, venues/companies do not – or cannot afford to – invest in commissions and tend to only consider plays that have already been written (France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Romania), which they do not have to pay to acquire.

    - **Repertoires and ensembles**. State-run theatres in Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Poland tend to employ ensembles of actors on a full-time, ongoing basis and programme plays on a repertoire-style rota (that is, the same play will be on once every 2–4 weeks for several months or years, depending on demand). All other countries employ actors on a freelance basis and programme plays in single-block runs of varying length, from a few days to several weeks,

months or years. This practice influences the kinds of plays that are staged and the support/feedback the playwright receives in the development process.

- **Literary agencies and agents.** The most significant divide we identified in this field is between those countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, UK) where playwrights tend to be represented by commercial agents, literary agencies or publishers – albeit with different working methods and remits – and those countries where playwrights are expected to promote their own work and negotiate contracts themselves, or where only a few commercial literary agencies exist (France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain).

- **Exchange with other media.** Countries were split between those in which dramatists generally also write for other media, such as radio, TV and film (Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Spain and the UK), and those in which this exchange was not frequent (France, Italy, Poland, Romania). Many countries reported a sense of mistrust from professionals in commercial media, such as TV and film, towards theatre writers, who tend to work in the subsidised sector.

- **Press coverage**. While coverage of contemporary theatre in the printed press is perceived to be in decline in every country we surveyed, web-based criticism is generally an area of growth. Specialised theatre press that covers new plays exists in every country. The most significant difference we encountered is whether experts perceived that national newspapers take an interest in contemporary playwrights and their craft, or not. Experts in Austria, Germany, Spain and the UK reported that at least some national newspapers do cover contemporary playwriting, while most experts in other countries lamented the lack of coverage in national printed press.

- **Publishing**. Approaches around publishing play scripts vary widely. In most countries, the majority of new plays are never published as books because of a lack of play script reading market (Romania, Czech Republic, Poland, Spain, Italy), while in other countries (Austria and Germany), publishing plays as books is not standard practice, and instead plays are published in magazines or distributed by agents in electronic form. In the UK, only plays that are staged can be considered for publication, but only those that are deemed financially viable are marketed as books. In France, where the publishing industry is subsidised by the state, new plays are considered for publication by specialist publishers independently of their staging history.

Overall, the combination of these distinctive traditions, systems and perceptions shapes the field of contemporary playwriting and theatre translation in every region and country. Areas of practice that have not been investigated in this report, but would deserve further research, include: theatre and playwriting in primary and secondary education; audience development activities; relationships between subsidised and commercial theatre sectors; stage aesthetics and taste.

II.5 Austria and Germany

Austria and Germany are discussed here in a single report because theatre cultures in these two countries share important networks and systems, display similarities in attitudes and tastes, work with comparable conventions, and the German and Austrian languages are entirely intelligible to one another. This makes the circulation of texts and productions easy and commonplace, though some cultural differences persist. Both countries enjoy a solid and supportive contemporary playwriting culture against the backdrop of extremely well-funded state venues that routinely work with living playwrights writing in German and in other languages. However, in general, we found that our Austrian experts tended to be less confident about the state of their contemporary playwriting and theatre translation culture than our German interlocutors.

Our experts affirmed that in both countries, there has been a surge of interest in new plays in the past 10–20 years. The vast majority of respondents – 93% in Germany, 90% in Austria – were confident that most theatres in both countries 'regularly' or 'sometimes' programme contemporary plays. Around 70% of respondents in Germany affirmed that 'most' or 'some' audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays written in German, while in Austria this figure dropped to 60%.

With regard to contemporary plays in translation, the responses differ: in Germany, 60% of respondents thought that 'most' or 'some' audiences and makers are interested in contemporary foreign plays; in Austria, only 30% of respondents affirmed that 'some' are interested, which amounts to a marked difference between the two countries; however, we only had 10 responses from Austria so any single response makes a big difference. In response to this result, one expert commented: 'I actually think that the interest is nearly as high as in Germany.'

II.5.1 Key Players

Austria. Austrian theatres that programme new plays by local living authors are located in the capital and in a few other big cities. Some of the main venues for contemporary playwriting are the Schauspielhaus Wien, the Theater in der Josefstadt, the Volkstheater Wien, the Werk-X, the Wiener Wortstaetten, the Theater Nestroyhof/Hamakon, the Kosmos Theater, Dschungel Wien (Theater for young audiences) and, above all, the Austrian National Theatre/Burgtheater in Vienna; the Schauspielhaus Graz; the Landestheater and the Theater Phönix Linz; the Theater Kosmos Bregenz; and the Schauspielhaus Salzburg. Festivals include the Hin & Weg Theaterfestival, the DramatikerInnenfestival in Graz and the Wiener Festwochen.

Germany. In Germany, virtually every city has a state-funded theatre which programmes new plays – though some respondents suggest this is more systematically the case in Berlin. However, contemporary playwriting is not well represented German independent venues because these are spaces traditionally dedicated to theatrical 'research and innovation,' and playwriting is not perceived as 'innovative' enough. As a result, independent venues programme more collective devising and/or director-driven productions. It is beyond the scope of this report to list every theatre in Germany that programmes new plays, but below are some key players.

The main venues for contemporary playwriting in **Berlin** are the Deutsches Theater, the Schaubühne, the Maxim Gorki Theater, the Berliner Ensemble, and the Volksbühne. Some of the independent venues in Berlin also play a relatively important role in this field, such as the Interkulturelle Theaterzentrum (ITZ), the Theaterdiscounter (now called TD Berlin), the Theater an der Parkaue, the TAK (Theater Aufbau Kreuzberg) and the Ballhaus Ost.
In **other large German cities**, state-funded theatres that support playwriting include: Schauspiel Köln in Cologne; the Schauspiel Frankfurt; the Thalia Theater and the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg; the Nationaltheater and the Theaterhaus G7 in Mannheim; the Theater Rampe and the Staatschauspiel in Stuttgart; the Theater Bonn; Theater Osnabrück; Theater Heidelberg; the Schauspiele in Leipzig Düsseldorf and Dresden; the Kammerspiele and the Residenztheater in Munich; and the Staatstheater Nürnberg.

Festivals. Festivals in Berlin include the Berliner Theatertreffen (the Berliner Stückemarkt section in particular), FIND at the Schaubühne, Autorentheatertage at the Deutsches Theater and 100 Grad Festival. In Heidelberg, the Heidelberger Stückermarkt; in Mülheim, the Mülheimer Theatertage and Impulse Theatre Festival (also in Düsseldorf and Cologne); the Spielart Theaterfestival in Munich; the at.tension in Lärz; the Greizer Theaterherbst in Greiz.

II.5.2 Systems and Practical Conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities
Initiating a production. Theatres in both countries have a solid habit of commissioning plays from authors but will also consider plays that are already written. Respondents affirmed that both in Austria and in Germany new productions tend to result from commissions made directly by venues, directors, or companies. Often, these commissions are a result of agents/publishers pitching new plays to relevant venues, which then result in commissions from these venues. When a play in translation is staged, on the other hand, the process can be initiated by a publisher/agent representing a foreign playwright, a translator that knows a source text or a director that knows the foreign text.

Playwright fees. The most established playwrights can sustain themselves through playwrighting alone, but most also have another job. Playwrights in both countries tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee and box office percentage (between 10% and 14% of gross box office for authors depending on the size and reputation of the theatre). In both countries, a typical new play commission/premiere will be paid between €3,000 and €20,000, depending on the status of the playwright and the venue.

New play development is overwhelmingly funded with public money, through either state arts funding or city/regional arts funding (the latter is prevalent in Germany, due to the federal structure of funding streams). Funding opportunities for the development of new plays in Germany are provided through commissions by many theatres and theatre festivals (see those mentioned above). Other institutions sponsoring play development are the Deutscher Literaturfonds and the Heinz und Heide Dürr Stiftung. In Austria, play development is funded by Literar Mechana, the Wiener Wortstätten, UniT Graz and through the state and regional arts council's stipends and grants.

Translator fees. Translations can be commissioned by venues or by publishers, acting as agencies. Translators are paid either a flat fee only (between €500 and €2,000 depending on the venue, the production budget and the playwright) or a flat fee and a percentage of box office income. If the translation is funded by the publisher/agency, they retain a share of

copyright. Generally, if there is a translation, the split is 7.7% for the author and 2.8% for the translator, but percentages vary if the agency is also involved.

Funding for translations. Respondents in Austria were unaware of funding streams specifically targeting the translation of new plays. Conversely, most respondents in Germany were familiar with translation-specific funding streams and cited the following examples alongside Fabulamundi: the Deutscher Übersetzerfonds and Literaturfonds, the Goethe Institut and other cultural institutes, publishing houses (Rowohlt, Suhrkamp, Fischer), theatres (when interested in producing a play), state-funded grants, awards and stipend programmes (that is Bundesland-specific 'Übersetzerstipedien'), and other organisations, such as the Projektförderung Literatur Berlin, the Arbeitsstipendium Literatur Berlin, the Kinder- und Judendtheaterzentrum (KJTZ), the Internationales Theaterinstitut (ITI), the Berliner Übersetzerwerkstatt and the European Theatre Convention (ETC). Drama Panorama is a network of theatre translators, but it does not provide funding.

Length of run and tours. German and Austrian state-run theatres tend to employ a permanent ensemble of actors and present work on a repertory basis, whereby a production may be on once or twice a week for several years. As a result, plays by contemporary playwrights do not tend to tour after opening in the producing venue, although some touring happens nationally around specific festivals, rather than venues, and the most prestigious ensembles can tour internationally. German and Austrian independent theatre productions of new plays do not tour very often, but they sometimes tour to the Impulse Theater Festival, which is held every year in the Rhine-Westphalia region, in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Mülheim an der Rhein.

Exchanges with other media. Respondents affirmed many playwrights also write for film and TV both countries, and that contemporary plays are 'sometimes' programmed on radios on Deutschland Radio Kultur. An expert argued that, in Germany, 'in comparison with theatre productions, playwrights can sometimes earn more for a radio commission than for a theatre one, but fewer broadcasts in total are aired than productions performed.' Radio plays are broadcast less often in Austria, for instance on Ö1 Kulturradio, and playwrights 'sometimes' also write for TV and film.

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

***Dramaturgie* departments.** Most, if not all, state theatres in both countries have dramaturgy departments, which are responsible for all matters of text selection and have a big role in advising the artistic direction department. They attend rehearsals and take part in conversations around aesthetics, acting, text editing and interpretation.

Agents/publishers. Playwrights in both countries are generally represented by agents, which correspond in fact to publishing houses, based principally in Germany for both the Austrian and the German theatre scene. These tend to be theatre-focused sub-sections of big German publishers such as Rowohlt, S. Fischer, Henschel, KiWi and Suhrkamp; and theatre- and arts-focused publishing houses such Thomas Sessler Verlag and Kaiser in Vienna, henschel Schauspiel Berlin, Per H. LaUKe, Drei Masken, Verlag der Autoren, Felix Bloch Erben and Schäfersphilippen Verlag. In Germany, agents/publishers are very frequently successful in promoting their writers with venues.

Prizes and bursaries in Austria. According to respondents in both countries, prizes, awards, bursaries and/or residencies are made available to local and foreign playwrights by a wide

array of organisations. In Austria, prizes include the Retzhofer Dramapreis, the Nestroy-Preis, the Exil-DramatikerInnenpreis. Residencies and bursaries include the Hans-Gratzer-Stipendium, the Wiener Dramatik Stipendium the Peter-Turrini-Stipendium, the Preis der Theaterallianz, stipends offered by KulturKontakt Austria, Literar Mechana, the Bundeskanzleramt Wien and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMUKK); as well as the 'Stadtschreiber' stipends (both in Austria and Germany).

Prizes and bursaries in Germany. The most prestigious accolades include the Mülheimer Dramatikerpreis, the Berlin Theatertreffen and Heidelberger Stückemarkt prizes. The latter two are crucially open to foreign playwrights and have contributed to launching many European playwrights' careers. Also worth mentioning are the Kinder- und Jugendtheaterzentrum Preis, the Kleist-Förderpreis für junge Dramatik, the Jakob-Michael-Reinhold-Lenz-Preis der Stadt Jena and the Else-Lasker-Schüler-Dramatikerpreis. Bursaries are offered, among others, by organisations such as the Frankfurter Autorenstiftung, the Stuttgarter Schriftstellerhaus, the Akademie der Künste and the Stiftung Künstlerdorf Schöppingen.

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher education and other training in Germany. Many, if not most, aspiring playwrights in Germany study playwriting at the Berlin Universität der Künste (UdK), which offers the most prestigious course in the German-speaking world, the 4-year BA plus MA course in Creative Writing for the Stage. The course, which boasts a long list of celebrated alumni, concentrates on writing techniques, and no other theatre-related subject such as acting or directing are included in the curriculum. Playwriting can also be studied, but less specifically and as part of theatre practice, in German *Hochschulen* (conservatoire and drama schools) such as the Theaterakademie August Everding München; the Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf; the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch; the SRH Hochschule der populären Künste; and the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg or Felix Mendelsohn Leipzig. Other universities offer Theaterwissenschaft (Theatre Studies) courses that focus on the theory and history of theatre and often include contemporary playwriting, which is taught theoretically. Less formal contexts include the Neues Institut für dramatisches Schreiben, or NIDS (New Institute for Dramatic Writing) founded by playwrights Maxi Obexer and Sasha Marianna Salzmann in Berlin.

Higher education and other training in Austria. Respondents from Austria agree that playwrighting is studied mainly informally, but also at certain universities, especially the *Sprachkunst* (Language Arts) programme at the Univerität für angewandete Kunst in Vienna – a creative writing course which includes dramatic writing – and UniT Graz's Dramaforum – a two-year selective course. Drama schools in Austria do not tend to offer playwriting, but informal courses are held, for example, at the Wiener Wortstaetten, Leondinger Akademie für Literatur and during the Hin & Weg festival.

Publishing. Plays in both Germany and Austria are not often published as books. Instead, they are publicised within the industry as part of a publisher/agent's catalogue and sent to the *Dramaturgie* departments to be read and selected for production. Some theatre-focused magazines publish contemporary plays – for example, *Theater der Zeit* and *Theater Heute* in Germany, which feature an unpublished play in every issue. In Austria, literary magazines *Manuskripte* and *Lichtungen* sometimes publish plays.

Press. The vast majority of respondents in both countries affirmed that reviews or features about contemporary plays 'regularly' or at least 'sometimes' appear in the general press, such as national newspapers (in the *Feuilleton* or the *Kulturseite* sections of the most important newspapers such as *Die Zeit, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Berliner Zeitung, Tageszeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Der Spiegel* and *Der Freitag* in Germany, and *Der Standard, Falter, Kurier, Kronenzeitung* and *Die Presse* in Austria). Contemporary plays are 'regularly' reviewed and discussed in theatre-focused publications in Germany and at least 'sometimes' in Austria. Specialised Austrian magazines include *Die Bühne* and *Mottingers Meinung* (culture-focused) and local cultural magazines. Among the most important German magazines–relevant, however, both in Germany and Austria – are *Theater der Zeit, Theater Heute* and *Das Theatermagazin*.*Nachtkritik* is the most important online platform for theatre in Austria, Germany and Switzerland working with a big network of correspondents.

II.5.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Austria

Austria is a country of immigration and as a result has developed a diverse population in terms of linguistic, religious and ethnic affiliations. According to a 2019 report by the European Network of Legal Experts on Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination, the Austrian public sphere is permeated by anti-immigration and anti-refugee rhetoric and migrants currently 'suffer from discrimination in all fields' ('Austria – Country report non discrimination', p. 5). According to Minority Rights Group International, Austria exerts a strong pressure upon minorities to assimilate, and 'once minorities have Austrian citizenship, their minority origin is no longer recorded in national statistics, making indirect discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity hard to track' ('Austria'). Austria has ranked 13th in the EU for the 2019 Gender Equality Index, holding this position since 2005, with most of its scores being above the EU average (Gender Equality Index 2019 - Austria).

The experts we spoke to shared the view that diversity and inclusivity in Austrian theatre has improved over the past ten years. 70% of respondents in Austria were aware of organisations which foster equality in the theatre and the arts. Examples mentioned were the IGFT (Austrian Association of Independent Theatres) and the Göthe Protokolle (a group in which theatre makers can report discrimination); The Wiener Perspektive (an artist-run Vienna-based organisation focusing on fair pay and working conditions); and the Interessengemeinschaft Kultur Österreich or IG Kultur (the association of Austrian cultural organisations). 40% of respondents in Austria were aware of organisations monitoring progress in EDI. The only example given was the IGFT, which was said to often act as a 'pressure group' for the field.

Despite Austria being judged better than most countries in Europe with regards to gender equality, only 20% of respondents thought that women playwrights have equal opportunities in Austria, and 70% thought they do not. Equally, only 40% of respondents thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities, while 30% thought they do not.

Relatively high levels of awareness around discrimination were recorded in relation to ethnicity and disability: none of respondents thought that ethnic minority playwrights have equal opportunities in Austria, while 50% thought they do not, and the other 50% didn't know. Similarly, none of the respondents thought that disabled playwrights have equal opportunities in Austria, while 50% thought they do not, and the other 50% didn't know.

Germany

According to Minority Rights Group International, around a quarter of the German population currently has a 'migration background' (born a foreign national or with at least one parent not born with German citizenship), and it is estimated that by 2040 one in three residents of Germany will fit this definition ('Germany'). A 2019 report by the European Network of Legal Experts on Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination states that German society is characterised by 'high degree of awareness… of the horrors of the Nazi period [which creates] a sense of responsibility for a strongly protected human rights culture' (Germany – Country report non-discrimination, p. 6). Additionally, Germany has one of the largest refugee populations in Europe. Germany ranked 12th in the EU for gender equality according to the Gender Equality Index 2019, with scores generally above the EU average, and progress being implemented faster than the EU average (Gender Equality Index 2019 - Germany).

Experts we spoke to mentioned that the inclusivity of German theatre has improved over the past ten years. One expert commented: 'Even though the situation has improved for people of colour in the last 10 years (there is more awareness), German theatre is still a place of power, dominated by white and able-bodied men over 50'.

48% of respondents in Germany were aware of government policies, funding bodies or activist campaigns to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in the theatre industry. Examples mentioned were the national, city and regional arts funding; the Fonds Darstellende Künste (a funding body for the independent scene); the association of German theatres, Deutscher Bühnenverein; Theater Thikwa in Berlin (working with inclusive subtitles for the hard of hearing and for non-German-speaking audiences, audio transcriptions, etc.); the German branch of the International Theatre Institute; the Neues Institut für Dramatisches Schrieben or NIDS (a playwriting school run by playwrights for playwrights); Die Vielen (a charity promoting an international mindset and tolerance in performing and fine arts); Pro Quote (a feminist organisation promoting gender equality in casting practices); the Initiative für Solidarität am Theater or ISaT (a network promoting the representation of underrepresented and misrepresented minorities in the German theatre); the Ensemble Netzwerk (a charity campaigning for better conditions for freelance and employed theatre-makers in publicly funded German theatres); and Fonds Soziokultur (a funding body that supports projects for the inclusion of disadvantaged parts of society). As for venues actively promoting equality, diversity and inclusion through playwriting, many were mentioned, including: in Berlin, the independent theatre Interkulturelles Theaterzentrum, the Maxim Gorki Theater, RambaZamba Theater, which has an ensemble of actors with and without disabilities; and the Ayşe X theatre in Munich.

29.6% of respondents in Germany were aware of organisations monitoring progress in EDI. Some examples mentioned were Nachtkritik; Pro Quote; the Deutscher Bühnenverein; the UdK; the Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung; the Maxim Gorki Theater; the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung; the ITI; and *Die Deutsche Bühne*.

Respondents in Germany seemed much more optimistic around equality in the playwriting sector than their Austrian counterparts. The most confidence was recorded around gender, with 63% of respondents affirming that women playwrights have equal opportunities in Germany, while 33.3% affirming that they do not. Similarly, 63% of respondents thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities in Germany, while 18.5% thought they do not.

Around ethnicity and disability, opinions were more cautious: 40.7% of respondents thought that minority ethnic playwrights have equal opportunities in Germany, 33.3% thought they do not. Similarly, 40.7% thought disabled playwrights have equal opportunities in Germany, while 25.9% thought they do not.

II.5.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

‘Get involved in festivals in the Germanophone countries, where it is easier to meet people (especially international ones).’
‘Have your play translated into German or English (if possible, by a good translator!), or write a multilingual play. Then, pitch your play to one director or dramaturg in particular, whose work you know and feel your play would resonate with. Explain to them why you think this is.’
‘Get in touch with publishing houses and/or professional theatre translators who work closely with theatres and dramaturgy departments.’
‘Send your play (or a translation of it) to self-organised networks such as Drama Panorama and Eurodram, which connect playwrights with translators and professionals from different countries.’

II.6 Czech Republic

Contemporary playwriting and theatre translation in the Czech Republic are characterised by established structures of support for writers, yet our interviewees reported contrasting opinions on levels of interest in new plays from commissioning theatres and audiences. The theatre scene in the Czech Republic includes state-run venues, which operate on a repertory system and employ an ensemble of actors, and the independent scene, which is subsidised but not state-run, and instead employs freelancers. Money is scarce in both, but state-run theatres operate a more sustainable business model because they enjoy relatively stable funding and can plan ahead. Contemporary plays are produced by both state-run and independent theatres. Respondents were split between those who see the interest in new plays growing and those who note that Czech audiences are still not very open to contemporary playwriting. Our survey showed that 40% of respondents believe Czech theatres ‘regularly’ programme contemporary plays, while over 50% think they are ‘sometimes’ programmed. 55% of respondents are confident that ‘some’ or ‘most’ Czech audiences and makers are interested in contemporary Czech plays, while 45% think that audiences and makers are not generally interested in new plays by Czech authors. Many respondents commented that while theatre-makers would like to stage more contemporary plays, audiences are more interested in classic plays. By contrast, our respondents think Czech audiences are more likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation (80% of our respondents think ‘some’ or ‘most’ audiences are interested in contemporary plays in translation, versus 55% for contemporary Czech plays). Confidence in the popularity of contemporary local plays in the Czech Republic was among the lowest we recorded.

II.6.1 Key Players

The main centre of contemporary playwriting is located in the capital city of **Prague**, but activity in smaller cities is also lively. In Prague, the most important venues supporting living playwrights are the National Theatre (Narodni Divadlo Praha); Švanda Theatre; X10 Theatre; A Studio Rubín; Studio Hrdinů; Venuše ve Švehlovce; Palmovka Theatre; Kampa Theatre; Studio Dva; Disk Theatre; Na Zábradlí (Theatre on the Balustrade); Vinohrady Theatre; and Dejvické Theatre. Prague is also home to many companies who work in this area: Divadlo Letí (which has a stable home in VILA Štvanice), Vosto5, Masopust and others. In the second largest city, Brno, venues include the Brno National Theatre, HaDivadlo, Husa na Provázku and the theatre company Divadlo Feste.

Smaller cities featuring work in this area are České Budějovice (South Bohemian Theatre); Ostrava (venues such as the Arena Chamber Theatre and the Petr Bezruč Theatre); Liberec (with its puppet venue Naivní Theatre focusing on children's theatre and the Theatre F. X. Šaldy, which programmes the WTF Festival); Ústí nad Labem (with the Činoherní Studio theatre); Hradec Králové (Drak Theatre focusing on children's theatre and Klicperovo Theatre); and Pilsen (Alfa Theatre, focusing on children's theatre).

II.6.2 Systems and Practical Conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities

Initiating a production. The most likely way for new play productions to be initiated is for resident dramaturgs or artistic directors of venues or companies to commission a playwright to write a new script, or for playwrights to pitch to venue dramaturgs. Less frequently, playwrights pitch new work to directors, or playwrights' agencies promote their plays with venues and companies. If a play is commissioned by a venue, the playwright is supported by the dramaturg and director along the creative writing process.

Playwright fees. Playwrights based in the Czech Republic find it very hard to sustain themselves through playwriting alone, including the most established. Playwrights under commission tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee – currently 'around €750–2,000' for a commissioned play, according to several experts – topped up by 6–12% of gross box office intake. If a play has not been commissioned but has been selected by a venue, the writer is paid through box office percentage only, again 6–12%, without a guaranteed minimum.

Translator fees. If a translation of a play is commissioned, it is usually paid €500–€1,100, plus a variable percentage of box office intake, around 5%. If translators have not been commissioned, there is no fee, and they are offered 5–6% of gross box office intake only.

Play development funding. Thedevelopment of new plays tends to be funded by authors' private money or, less commonly, by state or E.U. funds. The Czech Literary Fund and the Ministry of Culture provide bursaries for authors to write new texts.

Length of run and touring. New play productions in the Czech Republic tend to have repertory-style runs, so that they are performed once to three times a month for two to five years. Sometimes, new plays tour to a few other national venues after the premiere but do not tend to tour internationally. National tours most commonly happen in theatres that do not have a permanent ensemble.

Exchange with other media. Many Czech playwrights also write for TV, film or radio, and the exchange between media is the norm. One expert commented: 'It is impossible to live off plays, so you have to write for other media, or have other jobs.' The Czech national radio, especially the stations called Vltava and Dvojka are key players in contemporary playwriting because they commission new plays 'more often than theatres' and 'pay better rates,' according to several experts.

Prizes. Prizes for scripts that have yet to be produced include the Evald Schorm Award for emerging playwrights and translators, run by the Dilia agency, which comprises several categories, including Best New Play, Best New Adaptation and Best New Translation; and the prize for Best New Play awarded by the Aura-Pont agency, which has a category for Best Radio Play too and is open to any script regardless of the author's agency affiliation. Theatre Letí run the Mark Ravenhill Prize for Best Production of a New Play, which contributed to promoting the culture of contemporary playwriting in the Czech Republic.

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

Gatekeepers. Most theatres and companies in the Czech Republic employ resident dramaturgs (who are also sometimes playwrights themselves), whose role it is to source and suggest new plays to artistic directors. In state theatres, the dramaturg's tasks include picking the best plays that would develop the ensemble, matching plays with directors and supervising rehearsals on all matters of text. However, artistic directors of venues have the last word in the selection of new plays for production.

Agencies. Local theatre and literary agencies, Aura-Pont and Dilia, also have a key role in promoting authors working in Czech and Slovak, as well as in foreign languages. These agencies, which offer a copyright fee collection service and look after playwrights' professional needs, also operate on a commercial basis – charging 10% of royalties – to sell works by represented authors to state-run venues and independent companies. Both Aura-Pont and Dilia fund speculative translations of foreign plays.
The promotion of writers happens mostly through the agencies' own trade magazines, *DILIA News* and *Aura-Pont Papers* (both published quarterly), which are a pivotal way to communicate with professional dramaturgs around the country. Most authors in the Czech Republic are affiliated with one of these agencies and many dramaturgs, though not all, heavily rely on the agencies' magazines to find new plays. One expert commented: 'Czech agencies cannot be compared to what we know from other countries like the UK or Germany. It is important to realise that there are only two agencies for thousands of foreign and hundreds of Czech playwrights. The promotion that agencies do is effective, but it's not targeted – it's very generic.'

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher education. Czech higher education institutions offer acting, directing or dramaturgy courses, which can include some creative writing sessions and practical playwriting modules, but otherwise specialist playwriting courses are not available at drama schools such as the DAMU in Prague and the JAMU in Brno. University theatre studies departments, such as the one at Prague's Charles University and the Masaryk University in Brno, concentrate on history and theory.

Publishing. Plays appear to be rarely published as books in the Czech Republic, and those that are published are mostly by established writers. The publishers Větrné Mlýny and Akropolis have published many contemporary plays, including those by the most established writers.

Press. Articles about contemporary plays appear to be very infrequent in the general press, such as in national newspapers. Contemporary plays appear to attract more attention in specialist theatre magazines, such as *Svět a divadlo* (World and Theatre) and *Divadelní noviny* (Theatre News), and in culture magazines, such as *Revolver revue*. The theatre magazine *Svět a divadlo*, published bimonthly, includes a new contemporary play in each new issue. The webzine *i-divadlo.cz* publishes professional and amateur reviews of plays. Audience development and public engagement activities do not appear to be high on the agenda.

II.6.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Czech Republic is home to a significant Roma minority which, according to Minority Rights Group International (Czechia) and a 2019 report by the European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination, still suffers from entrenched prejudice and marginalization (Czech Republic – Country report non-discrimination). Many foreign nationals live and work in the Czech Republic (around 9% of the population), mostly from other European countries, but also from Asia (Vietnam and China in particular). However, the above reports argue that a significant challenge faced by anti-discrimination legislation is achieving a shift in mindset to 'overcome the narrow and formalised perceptions of equal treatment and protection against discrimination held by public and political bodies' (Czech Republic - Country report non-discrimination, 2019, p. 5). The Czech Republic ranked 21st in the EU's 2019 Gender Equality Index, with all its scores being below EU average (European Institute for Gender Equality, Czechia - Gender Equality Index 2019). Additionally, the IGLA ranking placed the Czech Republic at 33rd place out of 49 European countries for its treatment of the LGBTQ community (IGLA 2021).

Our respondents affirmed that, currently, there are no public sphere debates around inclusion and representation in the arts in the Czech Republic, and theatres do not have to conform to any government guidelines in support of equality, diversity and inclusion in the arts. The vast majority of our respondents (95%) said they did not know of any funding body or activist campaigns that promote a culture of equal opportunities and inclusion, or any organisations monitoring progress in this field in the arts. This was the highest percentage of all the countries we surveyed. 50% of respondents did not know whether ethnic minority playwrights have equal opportunities in the Czech Republic, while only 5% thought they didn't. An expert commented: 'I think there is no discussion [around equality and diversity] at the moment and no minorities are really involved [in theatre]. We have a handful of actors of colour, and I don't think they are discriminated – there are just very few of them'.

70% of respondents thought that women playwrights have equal opportunities in the Czech Republic, and yet of the eleven most celebrated playwrights named by our respondents, only two are women. An expert commented: 'We have very few women playwrights and that seems to be the problem. Many have families and can't travel, so get fewer opportunities to develop their careers. Venue dramaturgs are more often women, while directors more often men. Venue dramaturgs often write adaptations of old texts, but new plays are more often

written by men'. 80% of respondents thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities in the Czech Republic.

II.6.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

'The role of theatre agencies in Czech Republic is significant so I think it is important to have an agent (or agency) here as well. Do contact Dilia or Aura-Pont. Also, it is good to know which theatre or company specializes on contemporary drama and try to be in touch with them (and this is also something the agency can help with).'
'I think the best approach is to send your work directly to dramaturgs of the theatres, rather than wait for your work to be discovered.'
'Unfortunately, my advice would probably be: write for less than seven actors and write comedies.'

II.7 France

France has built a supportive environment for theatre-makers and playwrights through sustained state funding of the arts and a nurturing interest from theatre gatekeepers, such as artistic directors, and from audiences. Yet according to our respondents, levels of activity in the field of contemporary plays are shrinking. One expert affirmed that: 'The overall impression one gets from France is that it's currently not producing many contemporary plays, if compared with the UK, for example.'

Our survey showed that 55% of respondents think French theatres 'regularly' programme contemporary plays, while 35% think they are 'sometimes' programmed: that is 90% in total. 20% of respondents are confident that 'most' French audiences and makers are interested in contemporary French plays, while 60% think 'some' are and 15% think that they are generally not. Our respondents' view is that French audiences and theatre-makers are marginally more likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation, but the distinction is nearly negligible. Contemporary plays in translation are staged relatively frequently in France, including in prominent settings. Data from our survey on the popularity of contemporary playwriting shows that French experts had the fourth lowest confidence level in the popularity of the field among the countries we surveyed.

One of the issues that emerged from the conversations we had with experts was that our survey respondents were almost entirely working in the subsidised sector, and their responses did not consider the commercial sector. However, the commercial sector also works with living playwrights. Sadly, the two sectors seldom cooperate, so the present report focuses on the subsidised sector.

II.7.1 Key Players

Paris is the main centre for theatre and contemporary playwriting culture in France, but activity is highly decentralised to other large and mid-size cities such as Avignon, Strasbourg, Lille, Saint Étienne, Marseille and Pont-à-Mousson. Paris boasts three writers' theatres which mostly programme living authors (Théâtre du Rond Point, Théâtre de La Colline and Théâtre Ouvert), and many venues that programme some new writing alongside other genres; for instance, Odéon–Théâtre de l'Europe; Théâtre 13; Le Cent Quatre; Théâtre de la Cité

Internationale; Théâtre Paris-Villette; Théâtre de la Ville; MC93–Bobigny; Les Plateaux Sauvages; Théâtre de la Bastille; Théâtre La Bruyère; Théâtre de Belleville; Art Studio Théâtre. The Comédie Française occasionally programmes new plays.

Important venues around the country include: the Theatre National de Strasbourg; Théâtre National Populaire–Villeurbanne and the Théâtre des Célestins in Lyon; the Théâtre du Nord Centre Dramatique National in Lille; the Centre Dramatique National de Reims, the Théâtre Joliette-Minoterie in Marseille; the Théâtre Nanterre–Amandiers; La Manufacture Centre Dramatique National de Nancy; the Comédie de Saint Étienne, Chok-Theâtre and L'estancot in Saint Étienne; the Théâtre 71 in Malakoff; the Théâtre National de Bretagne in Rennes; and the ThéâtredelaCité in Toulouse.

II.7.2 Systems and Practical Conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities

Playwright fees. According to the majority of our respondents, it is difficult to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in France, and many authors have second jobs in teaching, directing, acting or similar, including some of the most established. Playwrights tend to be paid a fee of between €2,000 and €5,000 for a commissioned play, depending on the theatre and on the stage of their career, plus 10% of gross box office intake. If the play has not been commissioned, it is common practice to offer playwrights 10% of box office only. However, French authors can count on funding opportunities offered by the state to support themselves during writing periods.

Translator fees. Translators of contemporary plays tend to be paid a fee of between €500 and €2,000 for a new translation of a contemporary play that has been commissioned, again depending on the status of the theatre and the playwright, plus a 10% of box office split (30/70) with the author. If the translation has not been commissioned, it is often offered a share of copyright only.

State theatre funding. France is one of the largest cultural spenders in the European Union, especially considering absolute numbers (Budapest Observatory). The French central and local governments subsidise a tiered network of theatres in each region and generously supports theatre freelancers, also known as the 'intermittents du spectacle.'

Length of runs and touring. New play productions in France tend to have short to mid-length runs of one or two weeks. Productions often tour to other national venues after the premiere and, sometimes, also to other French-speaking countries, such as Belgium, Switzerland or Québec.

Play development funding. There are many funding streams supporting thedevelopment of new plays, so it is not necessary for authors to self-fund development work. Authors wanting to take the time to write new work can apply for money via E.U., national, regional and city councils or other state-funded bodies or funds, but a minority of authors do fund these creative periods through private money. The state-backed organisation ARTCENA (previously named Centre National du Theatre) helps theatre-makers, including playwrights, with development funds. The scheme, called Aide à la Création des Textes Dramatiques, offers cash bursaries for authors and further funding if new plays are staged, and it applies to both contemporary plays written in French and foreign-language plays translated into French. The French Ministry of Culture, the Fondation Beaumarché, the SACD (Societé des Auteurs

et des Compositeurs Dramatiques) and the Centre National du Livre also offer support for writers to develop new work. La Chartreuse in Villneuve, near Avignon, provides free spaces for authors to write intensively for short periods.

Exchange with other media. French playwrights sometimes write for TV, film or radio, and the exchange between media is common but not the norm. Contemporary plays are often programmed on France Culture radio station, which regularly commissions new radio plays.

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

Gatekeepers. Artistic directors of venues, companies and festivals play a big part in selecting new plays for production. Some big venues have an artistic advisor or dramaturg who is in charge of selecting plays, or, sometimes, the shortlisting process is taken over by reading committees. Literary departments attached to venues, whose task it is to select writers and plays for production, exist only in very few institutions, such as Théâtre Ouvert, la Colline, La Manufacture/La Mousson d'Été, TNS, Comédie Française and Rond Point.

Reading committees. Reading committees are a particularly widespread model in France: these are advisory panels attached to theatre institutions, publishers, venues and festivals, whose job it is to scout new plays, both in French and in translation, for production, publication or translation. Reading committees often partner with one another to ensure they keep each other informed or work together to support authors. According to some experts, however, reading committees have limited influence over what is actually staged. The Eurodram network, which was founded in France, also functions as a reading committee, with national reading committees now scattered around Europe.

Maison Antoine Vitez. France is unique in Europe for having an institution specifically dedicated to the translation of foreign plays into French, namely the Maison Antoine Vitez (MAV). This extraordinary institution, entirely supported by the Ministry of Culture and Communication, provides funding, training, talks and general assistance to theatre translators and foreign authors. The Maison Antoine Vitez supports fifteen new play translations from foreign languages into French every year with around €2,500 each, selected by language committees and a panel of theatre-makers. The Institut Français, which is also funded by the Ministry of Culture and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promotes French culture and francophony around the world, including some translations of French plays into other languages. The SACD also offers funding streams specifically targeting the translation of new plays.

Agencies. Commercial literary agencies that promote playwrights are not a common model in France and, as a result, most French authors do not have an agent whose task it is to represent them. The SACD acts on behalf of authors to collect copyright fees.

Initiating a production. The most likely way for new play productions to be initiated is for directors to commission new plays or, alternatively, for playwrights to pitch plays to directors or companies. Less frequently, venues or producers commission or select new plays from writers. In terms of making productions of a play in translation happen, the most likely pathways are either venues sourcing new plays via French directors, or developing relationships with foreign playwrights or directors, or translators pitching translations of new plays to venues and directors.

Prizes. The most prestigious prizes for contemporary playwrights in France are the Molière Prize for Francophone Living Author; the Grand Prix de la Littérature Dramatique; the Grand Prix du Théâtre of the Académie française; the SACD Prize; the prize of the Journées de Lyon des auteurs de Théâtre.

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher Education and Other Training. At higher education level, practical playwriting courses are available at drama schools and universities, leading to qualifications in playwriting. The most prestigious institutions offering them are the École of the Théâtre National de Strasbourg (TNS); the École Nationale Superieure des Arts et Techniques du Théâtre (ENSATT) in Lyon; the École of the Théâtre du Nord in Lille; the École of the Comédie de Saint-Etienne; the École Superieure d'Art Dramatique (ESAD) in Paris; and the Conservatoire National Superieur d'Art Dramatique (CNSAD), also in Paris. University theatre departments also offer BA and MA courses in playwriting, directing and dramaturgy, which include some practice, such as the Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3; Université Paris Ouest Nanterre; Université Grenoble Alpes. Short professional-level courses and development opportunities are offered by institutions such as La Mousson d'Été, Théâtre Ouvert and La Chartreuse.

Publishing. Contemporary plays by established and emerging authors are regularly published in France and they are also very well distributed in both independent and chain bookshops. There are many publishers that specialise in theatre, including in texts by living authors and plays in translation. The most prestigious and best distributed publishers are: L'Arche; Actes Sud Papiers; Les Solitaires Intempestifs; Éditions Théâtrales; Éditions Espaces 34; Éditions Quartett; and Éditions Théâtre Ouvert/Tapuscrits.

Press. Articles about contemporary plays are not very frequent in the general press, such as *Le Monde*, *Libération* and *Le Figaro*. Culture and theatre magazines are very popular in France. Theatre-focused magazines tend to cover contemporary playwriting more often: *Théâtre/Public* (quarterly); *Alternatives Théâtrales* (published three times a year); *Frictions* (published three times a year); *L'Avant Scène Théâtre* (20 issues per year); *La Terrasse* (monthly); *Théâtral magazine* (bimonthly), *Incises* (yearly); *lestroiscoups.fr* (online news and reviews), *La Scène*; *Le Piccolo* (for children's theatre practitioners); *Théâtres* (quarterly); *Parages* (published twice a year by the TNS); *UBU Scènes d'Europe* (bilingual French and English, published three times a year). Online publications include: *Théâtre contemporain.net* (practical information, videos and reviews website); *Sceneweb.fr* (daily theatre news).

II.7.3 Equality, diversity, inclusion

According to Minority Rights Group International, France has one of the most ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse populations in Europe (France). The European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination states that French society is characterised by profound inequalities and social tensions which often intersect with cultural, religious and ethnic factors (France – Country report non-discrimination). However, it is illegal in France to collect personal data on citizens' ethnicity, therefore there are no official data on ethnic minorities. France was ranked third in the EU on the Gender Equality Index in 2019, just after Sweden and Denmark, with all its scores above the EU average (Gender Equality Index 2019 – France).

Despite this, a significant proportion of our respondents (over 45%) did not know of any government policies, funding body or activist campaigns to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion, or thought they did not exist (20%). A smaller proportion did know about such campaigns (30%). One respondent commented that: 'the state, through the ministry of culture, asks public theatres to respect equality between men and women, and to open to diversity, but if theatres don't (which is often the case), nothing happens'. It appears that the equality between 'men and women' is high on the agenda for the Ministry of Culture, which carries out regular monitoring for equality, but inclusivity is not a criterion guiding the distribution of funds. According to an expert, some progress on racial equality has been made through positive action taken by public theatres to train young artists in order to help them get into national drama schools.

The Mouvement HF was mentioned by our respondents as a civic association promoting equality between 'men and women', which monitors and lobbies organisations and data on the distribution of power and representation. The SACD also issues an annual report which includes data on gender equality. 60% of respondents thought that women playwrights did not have equal opportunities in France, while 30% thought they did. Additionally, 60% of respondents thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities in France.

Foregrounding cultural or ethnic diversity is not a priority on the French cultural sector's agenda. According to an expert, the majority of French society, including most influential decision-makers, prides itself for being colour-blind and based on absolute equality, while a minority aligns itself with postcolonial thinkers and highlights how inequalities still exist and must be addressed. 50% of our respondents thought playwrights of colour did not have equal opportunities in France, and only 35% thought they did. Our respondents also showed low awareness with regards to inclusion of artists with disability, with 50% declaring they did not know if playwrights identifying as disabled had equal opportunities in France.

II.7.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

'Have your work translated into English (or better, into French with a good translation) and then send it to the most influential reading committees in France to get you work selected and produced by them (those committees include: Artcena, La Mousson d'Été in Pont-à-Mousson, Théâtre Ouvert in Paris, Théâtre national de Strasbourg, Montevideo in Marseille, and La Comédie-Française in Paris).'
'Send your plays to the local partners of Fabulamundi (Mousson d'Été and Théâtre Ouvert for France) or get in touch with a translator at the Maison Antoine Vitez, or translate it into French and send it to reading committees (Rond-Point, Theatre de la Colline, de Strasbourg, etc.)'
'Send your text to La Maison Antoine Vitez and to publishing companies such as L'Arche or les Éditions Théâtrales.'

II.8 Italy

A contradictory picture of Italy's contemporary playwriting and theatre translation culture emerged from our survey and interviews. Many experts confirmed that interest in new plays has increased manifold in the past ten years, and our survey shows that activity levels are high. However, our qualitative data suggests that contemporary playwriting in Italy is currently far from a sustainable field.

A new theatre funding reform, introduced in 2015, demands that all state-funded theatres include quotas of contemporary plays in their programming, but otherwise introduced measures that place writers and translators at a disadvantage by discouraging national tours. Overall, the Italian system appears lacking in support structures for local playwrights. While individual exceptions and success stories exist, these appear to thrive through support obtained on international networks.

Of all the countries we surveyed, our Italian respondents and interviewees showed among the lowest levels of confidence around the popularity of new plays in the local language and in translation. Only 33% of respondents agreed that plays by living playwrights are 'regularly' programmed by the country's venues, with Romania being the only other country scoring lower. Asked if they thought audiences and theatre makers were interested in new plays, 69% of respondents said that 'most' or 'some' are interested in contemporary plays in Italian, while only 51% of our respondents thought that Italian audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays in translation. Our respondents' perception is that new plays in translation attract less attention than new Italian plays, but that new plays in translation – especially by the most established foreign authors – are often perceived as more prestigious than new Italian plays.

II.8.1 Key Players

Italian theatre culture is concentrated around some of the biggest cities up and down the country, but it is fair to say most playwriting activities are concentrated in the north and centre of the country. The main centres of contemporary playwriting are located in three big cities which host several dedicated institutions and festivals: Milan, Turin and Rome. In Milan, institutions include the Piccolo Teatro, the Teatro Elfo Puccini, the Teatro Franco Parenti, the Teatro dei Filodrammatici, the Teatro i and the Teatro dell'Arte–Triennale. Festivals in Milan include Tramedautore (the only festival in Italy to focus entirely on contemporary plays) and Danae (which does other genres too).

In Turin, we have the Teatro Stabile, the Teatro Piemonte Europa, the Festival delle Colline Torinesi and others. In Rome, venues include Teatri di Roma (Teatro Argentina; Teatro India; Teatro Torlonia), the Teatro Argot, the Teatro Vascello, the Piccolo Eliseo. Rome also hosts Romaeuropa Festival, Short Theatre and Trend festival, none of which is exclusively dedicated to new plays.

Other regional centres. The Emilia Romagna region has developed an important network of venues in Bologna, Modena, Cesena and other towns through its organisation Emilia Romagna Teatro (ERT) and yearly international festival VIE, which is very attentive to contemporary international playwriting. Tuscany also hosts lively small-scale venues that programme new plays, such as Teatro della Limonaia (Sesto Fiorentino); Kilowatt Festival (Sansepolcro), Armunia festival (Castiglioncello) and the Teatro Metastasio (Prato).
There is also some notable activity in other northern mid-size cities such as Bolzano (Teatro Stabile), Genova (Teatro Stabile; Suq Festival), Venice (Biennale Teatro) and Santarcangelo (eponymous festival). In Southern Italy, Naples is the most active hub for contemporary playwriting (Napoli Teatro Festival; Teatro Mercadante; Teatro Bellini), while lively scene can also be found in Palermo (Teatro Libero; Teatro Biondo) and Castrovillari (Primavera dei Teatri Festival).

II.8.2 Systems and Practical Conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities

State theatre funding. State funding provides a lifeline for Italian theatre, which does not have a strong commercial sector. Funding, however, is mostly channelled through venues and hardly ever distributed directly to artists. Additionally, experts mention that state and local authority funding for the theatre industry has been routinely cut in real terms in the past 10–15 years (see Budapest Observatory). The 2015 theatre sector reform demands that certain categories of subsidised venues, such as National Theatres, programme at least two plays by living authors per season, of which at least one must be an Italian author. This relatively new legislation results from growing activity levels and has resulted in even more attention towards contemporary plays in the past five years.
Playwright fees. Playwrights find it very hard to sustain themselves through playwriting alone in Italy, including the most established. Most authors do other jobs too, such as teaching, directing, acting or similar, and the most successful also run their own companies, often producing, directing and performing in their own plays too. When a play does get selected for a production by a company or venue, average advance fees for playwrights appear to be between €1,000 and €5,000.

Translator fees. Even the most established theatre translators find it hard to be paid a commission fee, which ranges between €500 and €2,000. More and more venues and companies offer royalties only as a form of payment (with 10% of gross box office split 60/40 or 70/30 between authors and translators, but with as little as 20 going to translators in a large number of cases where local agencies of English-speaking authors are involved in the transaction).

Length of run and touring. Most productions in Italy tend to have short runs of maximum two weeks – but often less at any given venue, and this is the case also for new plays. New plays only tour to a few other national venues after the premiere (often to co-producing venues), but do not tend to tour internationally. Many experts have confirmed that, before 2015, it was more common for productions to tour across the country, but the 2015 reform has made it less attractive for venues to tour produced work. This new state of affairs has come to the detriment of authors and translators, who could previously rely on performance rights income to make up for poor advance fees.

Exchange with other media. There also appears to be little exchange between the theatre and other broadcast media, such as film, TV and radio, and theatre writers struggle to translate their scriptwriting expertise to write screen or radio plays due to ‘a prejudice and mistrust between media,’ according to some experts.

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

Gatekeepers. Italian venues are generally not open towards unsolicited play submissions. In the absence of literary/dramaturgy departments or reading groups attached to venues, artistic directors rely on their network of directors and companies to propose new plays if they so wish, but they often ‘end up filling the new play quota at the last minute with inconsistent choices and low-quality selections,’ according to an expert.

Stage directors and some independent producers also appear to be influential players. A handful of translators routinely scout and translate plays in the hope some might result in productions, but they have limited influence. Few companies exist that only focus on contemporary plays, so it is hard for authors who do not also direct or run their own companies to know who to contact to have their plays considered for a production.

Agencies. A number of literary agencies exist but they only negotiate contracts and do not actively promote their clients with theatres. Most authors in Italy do not rely on agents to promote them, while the SIAE (Italian Society of Authors and Publishers) collects fees accrued in relation to publishing, performance and translation rights.

Prizes. Few playwriting prizes exist for scripts that have not been produced – the Premio Riccione/Tondelli being the most important one, followed by the Premio Hystrio for Under 35s – yet these do not seem to routinely translate into more commissions or productions for winning writers. The prestigious Ubu Prizes for Best New Italian Play and Best New Foreign Play are awarded every year to plays that have been produced in the past season.

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher education and other training. Two prestigious playwriting courses are offered by the Civica Scuola Paolo Grassi in Milan and the Accademia Silvio D'Amico in Rome, where playwrights train alongside actors and directors. However, contemporary plays are seldom taught in University Theatre Studies departments and, extremely rarely, in secondary and primary schools. Professional playwriting training is also offered by the Scuola di Teatro Iolanda Gazzerro in Modena (part of Emilia Romagna Teatro).

Publishing. There are a few publishers in the field of theatre who publish plays. These are Editoria e Spettacolo, Titivillus, Cue Press, Mimesis and Luca Sossella Editore. Publishers are only able to publish plays if a publication fee is paid to cover their costs, given that the market is limited.

Press. The general press in Italy does not cover new playwriting very often, according to our experts – neither in the form of reviews nor through features or interviews. The specialist press has near-exclusively transferred online, with only two print magazines, *Hystrio* and *Sipario*, still in circulation. Webzines that cover playwriting are numerous, on the other hand, such as Dramma.it; Teatro e Critica; Delteatro.it; Ateatro.it; Strategemmi; Krapp's Last Post; and Doppiozero.

II.8.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Many of our interviewees voiced concerns about equality issues in Italy, including poor awareness of the problems faced by women and minorities, and a lack of concrete measures to combat gender and racial prejudice in the theatre. Currently, there are no government guidelines in support of EDI in the arts. Italy ranked 14th in the Gender Equality Index, with an overall score just below EU average (Gender Equality Index 2019: Italy). According to a 2019 report by the European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination, tackling issues of racism, inequality and discrimination towards gender and ethnic minorities is perceived as low priority in Italy ('Italy - Country report non-

discrimination', 2019). According to Minority Rights Group International, racism in Italy is widespread not only in the general population, but also among politicians (Italy). Additionally, ILGA-Europe, the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, ranked Italy 35th out of 49 countries in Europe for the state of LGBTQ+ rights (Country Ranking, 2021), placing Italy in the bottom third.

Discriminatory attitudes are replicated in the theatre industry, where minorities, such as women, currently make up a much smaller proportion of established playwrights, actors and directors, and are very badly represented among venue and festival artistic directors. While homosexuality is somewhat tolerated in the theatre field, it is not often thematised on stage, and trans people's rights are not yet established in society as a whole. There are also very few activist campaigns and organizations in this field, especially with regards to racial inequality, and virtually no dedicated state funding, which was reflected in our respondents' views: the vast majority (over 90%) did not know of any government policies, funding body or activist campaigns to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion, or any organisations monitoring progress. The few respondents who knew of organisations and campaigns mentioned Amleta, which monitors the role of women in Italian theatre, and Teatro Utile, an organization that works to develop second-generation theatre-makers and writers. A festival mentioned by some as promoting the work of migrants and race equality was Suq in Genoa.

The low level of awareness around EDI in Italy is reflected in perceptions around access to equal opportunities in the field: 48.5% of respondents thought that women playwrights have equal opportunities, and 66.7% thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities in Italy, showing that many people still highly underestimate the problem. Perceptions around racial inequalities are somewhat more acute, with 48.5% of respondents believing ethnic minority playwrights do not have equal opportunities. The majority of respondents (45%) did not know whether playwrights identifying as disabled have equal opportunities in Italy, which demonstrates lack of awareness in this area too.

II.8.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

'Get in touch with a local director or an actor.'
'You need to have an Italian translation of your text, or at least an English one, in order to propose it to theatres and companies.'
'Hope for God's intervention.'
'Don't do it, my friend!'

II.9 Poland

In 2018, one of Poland's most influential theatre critics, Jacek Sieradzki, famously declared the 'end of the contemporary Polish plays problem' as part of his final judging report for the 24th National Competition for Staging Contemporary Polish Plays. He wrote: 'This competition was created [in 1994] to encourage Polish authors to write and Polish theatres to stage contemporary Polish plays – we do not have this problem anymore' (Lech 2018). While some respondents disagreed with this view and claimed that most new plays are not of high quality, many experts confirmed that, after suffering under Communism, contemporary playwriting has made a comeback thanks to the Polish theatre system's efforts towards rebuilding a sustainable ecology in the past twenty-five years.

Our survey showed that 65% of respondents think Polish theatres 'regularly' programme contemporary plays, while 35% think they are 'sometimes' programmed: that is an impressive 100% in total. 90% of respondents are confident that 'most' or 'some' audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays, and only 10% think that they are generally not. Our respondents' view is that Polish audiences and theatre-makers are marginally less likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation than in plays from Polish contexts. Contemporary plays in translation are staged relatively frequently in Poland, including in prominent settings, and, according to an expert, 'Polish audiences are open and used to seeing themselves reflected in stories coming from different cultures.'

II.9.1 Key Players

Warsaw and Cracow are the main centres for theatre culture in Poland, but many respondents agree that smaller cities play a very important role in the Polish contemporary playwriting ecology. The capital, Warsaw, currently hosts important venues such as Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, National Theatre Warsaw, Teatr Powszechny (Common Theatre), Teatr Żydowski, Teatr WARsawy, Nowy Teatr, TR Warszawa, Teatr Imka, Teatr Dramatyczny, Teatr Studio and Teatr Współczesny. Warsaw is also home to the Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne (Warsaw Theatre Meetings Festival) and Nówka SztUKa (New Art Festival), which takes place at the Theatre Institute. Cracow is on a par with Warsaw when it comes to contemporary playwriting in Poland: the Stary National Theatre, the Łaźnia Nowa, the Teatr Słowackiego and the Boska Komedia Festival are some of the venues and events that contribute to that ecology.

Important venues and events around the country include: in Poznań, the Teatr Animacji, Teatr Polski, Teatr Nowy, Metafory Rzeczywistości and the SztUKa SzUKa Malucha programme for young people at the *Centrum SztUKi Dziecka*; in Gdynia, the Playwriting Award Festival and the R@port Festival; in Bydgoszcz, the Festiwal Prapremier and Teatr Polski; and in Wrocław, the Grotowski Institute, Wrocławski Teatr Lalek and Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny. Worth mentioning are also the Modjeska Theatre in Legnica; the Teatr Współczesny in Szczecin; and the Teatr Wybrzeże in Gdańsk.

II.9.2 Systems and practical conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities

Playwright fees. It remains difficult to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in Poland. Many authors have second jobs, including some of the most established. Some playwrights also work as resident dramaturgs in theatre venues. Playwrights tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee – which tends to be between €1,000 and €2,000 whether it has been commissioned or not – and percentage of box office. However, many are also paid through a percentage of box office only, which is typically around 5–7% of gross box office intake.

Translator fees. Theatre translators mostly earn a combination of flat fee and percentage of box office for translation rights or, less frequently, a commission fee only. According to our experts, flat fees for translators of an average-length play tend to be around €1,000–€1,500 for commissioned translations, and the share of box office to be expected for copyright is around 3%.

Play development funding. According to our respondents, periods of development, in which playwrights work at their desks, are often sponsored by public money – state, regional or city council funding. For instance, City Councils often award competitive artist scholarships to residents of that area. Some respondents report that artists' private money is often needed to support creative periods. Crowdfunding is an emerging model too. Institutions such as the National Book Institute and ADiT Agency offer funding streams specifically targeting the translation of new plays. The Drama Laboratory at the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw organises play development activities for both Polish and foreign authors, such as readings with professional actors and directors.

Initiating a production. Polish venues do not have an established tradition of commissioning authors; instead, venues select new plays that have already been written, often via directors or companies. Once a play is selected, then the author gets supported throughout the creative process which may include some rewriting. According to our respondents, the most likely way for new play productions to be initiated in Poland is for directors or companies to commission new plays from authors, and then companies pitch to venues; or for authors to pitch to directors and companies, who then pitch to venues. Less frequently, it is venues who commission new plays. In order to make a production of a play in translation happen, the most likely pathway is that local directors know about or develop relationships with foreign playwrights and then pitch a project to a venue, or translators propose new foreign plays to venues, directors or companies. Alternatively, venues source foreign plays or develop relationships with foreign authors, and less frequently producers commission translations of new foreign plays.

Length of runs and touring. State-funded theatres work with stable ensembles and a repertory system, so a new play can be on for many years if it proves popular. Productions can tour nationally and internationally. Some prestigious productions of foreign plays, like *4:48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane, directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski, have gone on tour to various European countries, including the UK and France.

Exchange with other media. Many playwrights in Poland also write for other media such as radio, film and TV, and exchange with other media is the norm. Contemporary plays are often programmed on national radio, mostly adapted from stage to audio plays. Polish TV also broadcasts televised theatre, including new plays, and occasionally commissions living authors for the highly popular and long-lasting programme, Theatre TV. The Teatroteka project stages new plays for the small screen.

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

Gatekeepers. Our respondents agreed that the main gatekeepers are artistic directors and literary/dramaturgy departments working for venues and companies, but artistic directors definitely retain most power. Literary managers' duties include reading scripts, maintaining contacts with playwrights and, less often, commissioning new work, including translations. Most if not all venues have literary departments that will consider unsolicited scripts in Polish and in Polish translation, including all major theatres in big and smaller cities, such as Teatr Wybrzeże in Gdańsk (which focuses both on new Polish plays and translations) and Teatr im. Jaracza in Olsztyn (focusing mostly on translations).

Agencies. The local societies of authors, ADiT and ZAiKS, act on behalf of authors to collect copyright fees for them. Polish authors do not rely on commercial literary agents to promote them.

Prizes. There are a number of prizes dedicated to contemporary playwriting in Poland, including: Gdynia Playwriting Award (for Polish plays only); the Theatre Institute's National Competition for Staging Contemporary Polish Plays (for productions); the Strefy Kontaktu Prize; the Metafory Rzeczywistości Competition run by Teatr Polski in Poznań; the Centrum SztUKi Dziecka in Poznań (Children's Art Centre) for the Best Play for Children; and the Nike Awards (a literary award, sometimes given to plays).

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher education. At higher education level, most respondents agree that playwriting is most often studied in informal workshop settings, not leading to qualifications. Drama schools do offer modules on dramaturgy and playwriting as part of Directing, Puppetry or other courses, but they do not offer specialist playwriting courses. Prestigious schools include the Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Warsaw and Stanisław Wyspiański National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Cracow (AST), where Directing students can select a Dramaturgy specialisation. Practical playwriting courses are also offered by theatre venues through informal workshops; for instance, at the Stary Teatr in Cracow, Teatr Wyspiańskiego in Katowice, Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw, the Polski Theatre in Bielsko-Biała, and the Metafory Rzeczywistości Festival at the Polish Theatre in Poznań. University departments tend not to offer practical courses in playwriting, and instead concentrate on a theoretical or historical approach.

Publishing. Most respondents agree that contemporary plays by established and emerging authors are 'regularly' or at least 'sometimes' published as books in Poland. There are a few publishers that specialise in theatre, including in texts by living authors and plays in translation, namely arts and culture publishers Słowo obraz/terytoria, Fundacja Splot Press, Lokator and Jagiellonian University Press. *Dialog* magazine publishes plays in every issue.

Press. Articles about contemporary plays are not very frequent in the general press. Theatre-focused magazines cover contemporary playwriting more often: *Dialog*, a monthly magazine, plays a crucial role in disseminating work by contemporary Polish and foreign authors; *Didaskalia*, a theatre quarterly, covers new plays, and is now fully online and open access; and *Teatr*, published 11 times a year. Online publications that review contemporary plays include: *E-Teatr*, a database run by the Raszewski Theatre Institute that has all reviews, details of productions and publicity materials; *Dwutygodnik*; *Teatralny*; and *Teatrologia*.

II.9.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

A 2019 report by the European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination found that Polish society and culture is characterised by low levels of awareness of discrimination and under-reporting (Poland - Country report non-discrimination, 2019). According to Minority Rights Group International, Poland is one of the most ethnically and religiously homogeneous countries in the world due to mass deportation of minorities pre-1945 (Poland). In 2019, Poland was ranked 24th in the EU for gender equality by the European Institute for Gender Equality, with all its scored below the EU average (Poland - Gender Equality Index 2019). Additionally, ILGA-Europe, the

European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, ranked Poland 43rd out of 49 countries in Europe for the state of LGBTQ+ rights (Country Ranking, 2021).

When asked about equal opportunities, 55% of respondents thought that women playwrights have equal opportunities in Poland, while 60% thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities. 35% of respondents thought playwrights of ethnic minority have equal opportunities in Poland. 55% of respondents did not know whether playwrights identifying as disabled have equal opportunities in Poland. These answers raise serious questions about levels of discrimination awareness among theatre-makers in Poland.

Only 10% of our respondents knew of any theatre or arts campaigns around equality, diversity and inclusion in Poland, or any organizations monitoring equal opportunities over time. Organisations that were mentioned include: Stół Powszechny (Universal Table), a workshop space open to creative activities with migrants and refugees; Forum Przyszłości Kultury (Future Culture Forum), and organisation promoting feminist values; Kultura Niepodległa (Independent Culture), which supports free speech and the end of censorship practices in Poland; Obywatelskie Forum Sztuki Współczesnej (Civic Contemporary Art Forum), which defends worker's rights and equal opportunities for artists; and HyPaTia, an archival project to rediscover and highlight the role of women in Polish theatre history.

II.9.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

'Invest in a translation into Polish and try to publish a play in Dialog.'
'Finding a director or a good translator with a professional network is the best way to set up a cooperation.'
'Get in contact with ADiT agency and find the right theatres interested in contemporary plays or theatre directors to contact directly.'
'Send your play to Drama Laboratory at Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw.'

II.10 Romania

Romanian experts appeared to have the lowest confidence levels in the popularity of contemporary playwriting among all the countries we surveyed. Our data suggests that opportunities for local playwrights to earn their living are very limited and support systems are lacking for writers and translators. The state offers no incentives to innovate or work with living authors and, as a result, contemporary playwriting activity by state-funded theatres very much depends on individual artistic directors. State-run and subsidised theatres tend to work on a repertory system and employ salaried ensembles of actors, often catering for more conservative audiences who enjoy older, classical plays. By contrast, independent theatres, often collectively run by companies, have to apply for funding for every project, they tend to programme more new writing because they are able to take more risks, and they also tend to cater for younger audiences. Overall activity levels are considerable, and some green shoots are visible in a new generation of Romanian playwrights.

Our survey showed that 68% of respondents think Romanian theatres 'regularly' or 'sometimes' programme contemporary plays. 53% of respondents state that audiences and makers are not generally interested in contemporary plays, and only about 36% think that

'some' are. Romanian respondents were the least confident in the popularity of contemporary plays by local authors in their country. Interestingly, our respondents' view is that Romanian audiences and theatre-makers are much more likely to be interested in contemporary foreign plays: 84% of respondents stated that 'most' or 'some' audiences and makers are interested in those. One respondent commented: 'There is a general mistrust in Romanian contemporary authors. You will probably go and see a classical production; maybe a contemporary foreign (British or American) playwright. But audiences for contemporary Romanian authors are the smallest.' Things are changing, however, with more young audiences interested in new plays by living Romanian writers. Conversely, most respondents agreed that translated plays make up more than half of the total output. One expert commented: 'Translations are considered safer in Romania because they have already premiered [so have been tested elsewhere].'

II.10.1 Key Players

The capital currently hosts venues such as the Bucharest National Theatre; Teatrul Dramaturgilor Români (Romanian Playwrights' Theatre, which actually 'very rarely works with living playwrights,' according to an expert); Teatrul de Comedie; the Small Theatre; Metropolis Theatre; the Teatrul Odeon; the Teatrul unteatru; Teatrul Nottara; Centrul de Teatru Educațional Replika (Replika Educational Theatre Centre); Arcub Theatre; ACT Theatre; Theatre Monday at Green Hours; Apollo 111; Macaz Theatre; and Apropo Theatre. Bucharest also hosts several festivals, including Festivalul Național de Teatru, one of the most prestigious in the country; Fest(in) on the Boulevard – International Theatre Festival at the Teatrul Nottara; the Festivalul Comediei Românești Fest-CO (Romanian Comedy Festival) at the Teatrul de Comedie; and the Bucharest Fringe (Independent Theatre Marathon) at the Teatrul Apropo.

Other important mid-size cities around the country include: Târgu Mureș, with its National Theatre, Ariel Theatre, 3G independent theatre, University of the Arts Theatre and Yorick Studio; Timișoara, home to the Timișoara National Theatre, the Romanian Dramaturgy Festival and the independent venue Aualeu; Piatra Neamț, which hosts a Youth Theatre (Teatrul Tineretului), which premieres new Romanian writing, and the Piatra Neamț International Theatre Festival every year; Craiova, which is home to the National Theatre Marin Sorescu, with its 11plus1 independent/contemporary Festival showcasing the best independent theatre of the season, including plays; Cluj-Napoca, with its National Theatre, which sometimes programmes new writing, and the experimental venue Reactor de Creatie si Experiment (Creation and Experiment Reactor), which organises Drama 5 Residency; Sibiu, which also hosts its National Theatre, Gong Theatre and the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. Worth mentioning is also the Festivalul Internațional de Teatru pentru Copii și Tineret 'Luceafărul' (International Theatre Festival for Children and Youth) in Iași.

II.10.2 Systems and Practical Conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities

Playwright fees. It is very difficult – if not impossible – to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in Romania. Virtually every author has a second job, including the most established, frequently as directors, actors, teachers or journalists. On average, venues pay playwrights a fee of €1,000–€1,500 to acquire the right to perform the play for three to five years. Adding a share of gross box office income – currently 5–7% – is not common in Romania because tickets are very cheap, so the copyright is paid in advance and added to the

fee. Once the copyright period covered by the initial agreement expires, another fee is negotiated, which is generally €500 per year. The fee level is the same for commissions – which are not common – existing plays. The majority of respondents affirmed that artists' private money is needed to support creative periods. In terms of financial support, the National Cultural Fund Agency plays a part in subsidising writers and projects.

Translators fees. Theatre translators mostly earn a fee only and, less frequently, a combination of flat fee and percentage of box office (about a third of 5–7%). Most commonly, the translator's fee also covers a copyright buyout for three to five years. According to an expert, 'The average translation of a play is paid €1,000 for a production, and much less for a reading (€500 on average), while the foreign author receives 7% of box office until they have reached €1,000.'

Length of run and touring. Independent theatres work with block run schedules, while state theatres have a repertory system and employ ensembles. New play productions tend to have short to mid-length runs of one or two weeks in independent theatres and, occasionally, tour to other national venues after the premiere, but they do not tend to tour internationally. According to an expert, 'In state-run theatres, new plays run for at least one year and are performed on average once a month, but don't tend to tour anywhere, while new productions of international plays in translation tend to be on repertory for 1-3 years and sometimes tour nationally.'

Exchange with other media. Playwrights in Romania do not often write for film and TV, and exchanges with other media are very infrequent. Contemporary plays are often programmed on radio – yet not specifically commissioned for this medium – with the programme Teatrul Național Radiofonic being the most popular. Romanian TV also programmes new plays (the TVR3 cultural channel and Television Theatre department produce a handful of shows a year by established authors). However, one expert commented: 'Radio and TV don't really help support the culture of new playwriting.'

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

Gatekeepers. Our respondents agreed that the main gatekeepers in the field are artistic directors and stage directors, who have the power to decide what plays are staged. One respondent commented: 'While younger directors (in their 30s) will often work on Romanian texts, established directors – those who work in the large state theatres – avoid texts that have not been validated by national prizes or international success.' One respondent commented: 'The interest in contemporary plays is theatre director driven. If a theatre director proposes to an artistic director a contemporary play – this is it. There are no clear strategies toward contemporary drama in Romania. Often programming feels arbitrary and it seldom includes contemporary playwriting.' Another respondent commented: 'The theatre system in Romania is director-focused and their proposed projects.' Most venues have 'literary secretariat departments,' whose job description however does not include considering unsolicited scripts or making recommendations for selecting plays to add to the repertoire. Translators also have a key role to play, but their power only rests in the extent of their network and social capital; depending on this, they are able to promote playwrights from other countries.

Initiating a production. According to our respondents, the most likely way for new play productions to be initiated in Romania is for directors or companies to contact authors, or for authors to pitch to directors and companies, and for the director/company to then pitch to a

venue. On fewer occasions, it is venues who decide to stage a new play by a specific author in collaboration with a director. There is no established tradition of venues commissioning new plays from authors in Romania. In terms of making productions of a play in translation happen, the most likely pathway is that local directors know about or develop relationships with foreign playwrights, or translators propose new play translations to directors or companies. Alternatively, but this is a lot less frequent, venues source foreign plays, or develop relationships with foreign authors, or commission translations of new foreign plays.

Agencies. The local societies of authors, which are supposed to collect copyright fees for authors, are not very widely used. Romanian authors do not rely on commercial literary agents to promote them, as every author is used to promoting themselves.
Prizes. There are some prizes dedicated to contemporary playwriting in Romania, including: the Play of the Year Prize by UNITER (also known as the Fundația Principesa Margareta Prize for Dramaturgy); the National Dramaturgy Contest organised by National Theatre Timișoara; the Best Romanian Comedy organised by the Comedy Theatre in Bucharest; and draMA, an annual playwriting competition organized by the theatre of Odorheiu Secuiesc. However, one expert commented: 'Winning these prizes does not tend to have much of an effect on playwrights' careers.' Residencies are offered by Reactor in Cluj (Drama 5), Macaz Theater Coop in Bucharest, the Iași Festival for Young People and Transylvania Playwriting Camp (co-produced with The Lark in New York).

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher education. In Romania, theatre universities, such as the Faculty of Theatre and Television at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, coincide with conservatoires and offer practice-based teaching. Romanian universities offer BAs in Acting, Directing, Choreography, Puppet Theatre, Theatre Studies and Music Pedagogy. At undergraduate level, there are no specialist playwriting courses, but some courses teach devising techniques and basic dramaturgical structures. At postgraduate level, the University of the Arts in Targu Mures (UAT) and the National Theatre and Film University I. L. Caragiale of Bucharest (UNATC) currently offer 2-year MAs in Playwriting. There are also more informal educational opportunities, such as workshops, offered by venues such as Replika in Bucharest and Reactor in Cluj, and masterclasses during theatre festivals.

Publishing. Contemporary plays by contemporary authors are 'rarely' or 'never' published as books in Romania as there is no market for play scripts. However, arts and culture publishers, such as Tracus Arte, Timpul, Cartea Românească and Charmides, sometimes publish plays. On the whole, plays that are released as books tend to be published by organisations such as theatre venues that also have small publishing branches. For instance, UNITEXT is the publishing branch of UNITER, which publishes the Play of the Year winner every year. Nemira and Liternet.ro publish some plays online and as e-books. The Camil Petrescu Foundation, which publishes the theatre magazine *Teatrul Azi*, also publishes plays and books on contemporary dramaturgy.

Press. Over 80% of our respondents think plays by living playwrights are 'rarely' or 'never' covered by national newspapers. Theatre-focused magazines cover contemporary playwriting more often and include: *Teatrul Azi* (print theatre magazine); *Scena 9* (print theatre magazine); *Scena.ro* (print theatre magazine with a bilingual English and Romanian website); *Observatorul Cultural* (print culture magazine); *Capital cultural* (online culture magazine); *Ziarul Metropolis* (online culture magazine); *Dilema Veche* (weekly print

magazine on culture and politics); *Revista 22* (weekly print magazine on culture and politics); and online theatre magazines *yorick.ro* and *amfiteatru.ro*.

II.10.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

According to a 2019 report by the European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination, discrimination of all minorities (gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability) and a resurgent extreme nationalism permeate the Romanian public sphere (Romania – Country report non-discrimination). Despite the fact that Romania adopted Anti-Discrimination Law in 2000, the protection of basic human rights is still far from being implemented. The report also argues that, the Roma ethnic minority and the LGBTQ+ community remain the most at risk. According to Minority Rights Group International, ethnic minorities, especially Roma, continue to face high levels of social exclusion (Romania). Romania ranked 25th in the EU in the European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Equality Index 2019, with all its scores below the EU average. ILGA Europe placed Romania in 37th place out of 49 for LGBTQI rights in Europe.

Our respondents showed low levels of concern around gender equality issues in the theatre. One respondent commented: 'Issues of equality are only examined in the independent scene. State theatres do not tackle these themes, which is to say that they never stage performances about feminism, or LGBTQ people, or about the Roma community. This lack of diversity is rarely talked about in the public sphere'. 77% of respondents thought that women playwrights have equal opportunities in Romania. An expert commented: 'Life for women playwrights is difficult but possible in Romania', while another said 'You cannot live off playwriting as a woman in Romania'. 58% of respondents thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities in Romania. With regards to race and ethnic equality, 42% of respondents said they did not know if ethnic minority playwrights have equal opportunities in Romania. One expert commented: 'In Romania, Roma and Hungarian minorities are sometimes heard in the theatre, but they have fewer opportunities.' One respondent commented: 'Playwrights of different ethnic background are staged in Romania, but they are not commissioned as often'. There was little awareness of issues of equality for disabled theatre-makers, with 45% of respondents did not know whether playwrights identifying as disabled have equal opportunities Romania.

Only 7% of our respondents knew of any theatre or arts campaigns around equality, diversity and inclusion in Romania. One of such named organisations was the National Cultural Fund Administration (AFCN), which finances independent theatres and includes rules that promote equality and inclusivity. One expert commented that a Roma-led theatre company called Giuvlipen is very engaged with promoting equality and diversity in Romania. The magazine Scena.ro sometimes publishes articles promoting the values of equality, diversity and inclusion.

II.10.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

'Meet as many Romanian directors as possible, for now they are pushing new plays on Romanian stages.'
'Approach good theatre directors in their 30s–40s.'
'Contact the Fabulamundi partners in my country, to find a good translator that is connected to the theatre scene, then establish a good relationship with a well-connected translator.'

II.11 Spain

Over the 1980s and 1990s, Spain developed cultural politics supporting playwriting and has promoted the work of living dramatists writing in all its four national languages. The system is built on the work of a large number of key producing venues which have developed audiences' interest and taste in this area; education institutions, such as drama schools, offering playwriting qualifications; and professional support organisations providing the right networks for playwrights to develop their careers. Many of our experts have expressed a positive view of the culture, opportunities and support networks around playwriting throughout Spain. However, our experts say that more could be done in Spain to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in the field.

All of our respondents are confident that Spanish theatres programme contemporary plays 'regularly' or at least 'sometimes.' Some 89% of respondents are confident that 'most' or 'some' audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays, and only 10% think that they are generally not. Our respondents' view is that Spanish audiences and theatre-makers are as likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation as they are in plays from other local Spanish contexts. Contemporary plays in translation are staged frequently in Spain, including in prominent settings, and Spanish audiences are used to watching theatre in translation or in foreign languages. Our respondents' perception was that new foreign plays attract the same amount of attention among audiences and theatre-makers as new Spanish plays.

II.11.1 Key Players

Barcelona and Madrid are the main centres for theatre and contemporary playwriting culture in Spain, with one expert commenting that '80% of all theatre activity in Spain is concentrated in these two cities.' In Madrid, important venues include the Centro Dramático Nacional; Teatro Español; Teatros del Canal; Teatro de la Abadía; Kamikaze Pavón; Teatro del Barrio; Nuevo Teatro Fronterizo; Nave73; Teatros Luchana; Teatro Pradillo; Teatro Galileo; Sala Cuarta Pared; and Umbral de Primavera. Barcelona is home to Sala Beckett; Teatre Nacional de Catalunya; Teatre Lliure; Antic Teatre; Tantarantana; El Maldà; Sala Flyhard; La Villarroel; Teatre Akadémia; Sala Atrium; and Sala Hiroshima.

Other important venues around the country include Sala La planeta in Girona; the Teatro Lope de Vega and Sala La Imperdible in Seville; the Teatro Romea in Murcia; the Teatro Principal in Alicante; the Teatro Colón in La Coruña; the Teatro Cuillas in Las Palmas and many more. Festivals play an important role for contemporary playwriting in Spain. The Muestra de Teatro Español de Autores Contemporáneos in Alicante focuses on contemporary dramatists, while other festivals include plays as part of a wider programming strategy: the GREC Festival (Barcelona), Temporada Alta (Girona), TNT (Terrassa), FiraTàrrega (Tàrrega) and Festival d'Otoño (Madrid).

II.11.2 Systems and Practical Conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities

Playwright fees. It is difficult to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in Spain. Many authors have second jobs, including some of the most established. Commissioned plays are paid an average of €5,000–€7,000 plus 10% of gross box office intake. For plays that have not been commissioned, playwrights now tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee of about €2,000–€3,000 and 10% of box office, but many are still paid through a percentage of box office only.

Translator fees. Theatre translators mostly earn a combination of flat fee and percentage of box office for translation rights or, less frequently, just one of these two types of fees. If they are paid through the 10% of box office intake, this has to be split 70/30 or 60/40 between the author and the translator respectively).

Play development funding. Authors wanting to take the time to write new work can apply for money via regional and city councils or other state-funded bodies or charities, such as SGAE and the Institució de les lletres catalanes, or they can seek a commission from a commercial company which would provide an advance, but many authors do fund these creative periods through private money. The national Ministry of Culture, local governments and local councils offer some support for writers to develop new work. All the main venues and festivals, such as Sala Beckett, Institut del Teatre, Teatre Nacional del Catalunya, Temporada Alta and Nuevo Teatro Fronterizo, offer some form of support to writers developing new plays. Bursaries for writers are available every year: the Beca Leonardo by the Fundación BBVA and the Beques Carme Montoriol.

Length of run and touring. Productions of new plays by Spanish writers tend to have short to mid-length runs of three to four weeks, and sometimes tour to other national venues after the premiere. Some prestigious productions also tour internationally to other European or Spanish-speaking countries. New productions of international plays in translation tend to have shorter runs and only tour nationally.

Exchanges with other media. Many, if not most, Spanish playwrights also write scripts for radio, film or TV. Working across media is very common for writers, 'especially since the 1980s,' according to one expert. Radio Nacional de España programmes radio plays, and the prestigious Margarita Xirgu Radio Play Competition (Premio de Teatro Radiofónico Margarita Xirgu) has raised the profile of this genre.

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

Initiating a production. The most likely way for new play productions to be initiated in Spain is for playwrights to pitch their work to directors, venues or producers; alternatively, it is producers, companies or venues who commission new plays from authors. Prestigious drama schools also make sure to promote their students' work into festivals and venues nationally and internationally.

Gatekeepers. Artistic directors of venues and festivals play a big part in selecting new plays for production in Spain and act as the main gatekeepers. Literary/dramaturgy departments only exist in larger institutions, such as Teatre Nacional de Catalunya in Barcelona and the Centro Dramático Nacional in Madrid. The latter has an established reading committee too.

Production companies play a key role in the Spanish contemporary playwriting ecology, and some of them focus almost entirely on new writing, such as La Zona, Pentación and Smedia. In terms of making productions of a play in translation happen, the most likely pathway is that local directors know about or develop relationships with foreign playwrights. Alternatively, producers commission translations of new foreign plays or venues collaborate with foreign authors.

Catalandrama.cat. The Fundaciò Sala Beckett has created an online archive specifically focusing on the translation of plays, namely the Catalandrama.cat website, which provides free access to Catalan plays translated into other languages.

Agencies. The SGAE acts on behalf of authors to collect copyright fees for them. There are very few commercial literary agents representing playwrights, such as Marta Fluvia and Conchita Piña, and they tend to work only with the most established writers. This makes it impossible for Spanish writers to rely on agencies to promote them or negotiate on their behalf.

Professional organisations. The FiraTàrrega is an international performing arts fair that takes place in Tàrrega every September and offers an opportunity for movers and shakers to come together and decide what to promote next: as such, it is an important networking event. Other important organisations are the Academia de las Artes Escénicas – open to all theatre-makers, with membership by request, which supports the industry with many initiatives, including publishing the review *Escenarios* and theatre-related books – and the Asociación de Autores de Teatro – which publishes the review *Las Puertas del Drama* and organises shows, events, meetings, prizes, as well as the yearly Salón Internacional del Libro Teatral (International Theatre Book Fair), established in 2000.

Prizes. There is a remarkable number of prizes dedicated to contemporary playwriting in Spain – many more, and with richer prizes, than in other countries. The most prestigious prizes include the Premio Valle Inclán de Teatro, which offers €50,000 to a single theatre-maker each year – often a dramatist; the Premios Max, with categories such as Best Playwright, Best Emerging Playwright, Best Adaptation, Best Playwright in Galician, Best Playwright in Catalan, Best Playwright in Basque; the Premio Nacional de Literatura Dramática; the Premio Ciudad de San Sebastián for dramatic writing in Basque or Spanish; the Premi Born, which offers a cash prize and publication; the Premio Lope de Vega, for plays in Spanish; and the Premio Calderón de la Barca. Many more prizes are available for local playwrights, and this is a testament to Spain's efforts to engage more people with playwriting and build a sustainable playwriting culture.

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher education and other training. At higher education level, practical playwriting courses are available at drama schools. According to an expert, 'Specialist playwriting courses leading to professional qualifications in Spain appeared in the 1990s and this was a watershed moment, because it signalled to students that playwriting was an actual profession, that they would be taken seriously: then the networks started to appear, and the reading groups in major theatres, and interest started to grow.' Some of the most prestigious institutions offering them are the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático (RESAD) in Madrid and the other ten Escuelas Superiores de Arte Dramático (School of Advanced Theatre Studies) located around the country. For instance, the Escuela Superior de Arte

Dramático (ESAD) attached to the University of Castilla y León in Valladolid offers BA and MA programmes in Directing and Dramaturgy (with some practical playwriting). Other important schools around the country include the Institut del Teatre (Theatre Institute) in Barcelona; Eolia, Escola Superior de Arte Dramàtic in Barcelona; the ERAM School, attached to the University of Girona; and the MA Dramatic Writing at the University of Alcalá, associated to the Asociación de Autores de Teatro (Theatre Authors Association). Sala Beckett in Barcelona offers prestigious workshops and courses at various levels, mostly focused on writing for theatre.

Publishing. Contemporary plays by established and emerging authors are regularly published in Spain. There are many publishers that specialise in theatre, including in texts by living authors and plays in translation. Some of these are: Arola Editors, La Uña Rota, Editorial Aflera, Ediciones Irreverentes, Sial Pigmalon, Editorial Proa, Re&Ma, Artezblai, Comanegra/Institut del Teatre in Barcelona, Punto de Vista Editores, Edicions 62, Alba, Col.lecció Dramaticles – Pou del Petroli, Ediciones Antígona, Fundación SGAE, Teatro del Astillero, Ñaque Editores, Bromera, continta me tienes, Órbita.

Press. Articles about contemporary plays are not very frequent in the general press, but some of our respondents think plays by living playwrights are 'sometimes' covered by national newspapers, such as *El Mundo* (mainly through its magazine supplement *El Cultural*), *ABC*, *El País*, *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia*. Theatre-focused print magazines tend to cover contemporary playwriting more often, and they also all have online sections: *(Pausa.)*, the review of Sala Beckett; *Artezblai*, a national theatre and dance magazine in Castillan; *Entreacte*, a Catalan theatre and film quarterly; *Primer Acto*, a national bimonthly theatre magazine; *Las puertas del drama*, a national yearly theme-based theatre magazine; *ADE Teatro*, a magazine published by the Spanish Association of Stage Directors; *A Escena*, a free monthly theatre magazine and website; *Artescénicas*, a quarterly magazine published by the Spanish Academy of Dramatic Arts in Madrid.Online publications that review contemporary plays include: *Revistagodot.com* (theatre and culture), *Elcritic.cat* (generalist), *Núvol.com* (culture and arts), *Teatral.net* (theatre focus); *Itacaeolia.cat*, the magazine of the Escola Superior d'Art Dramàtic; and the webzines *Teatrebarcelona.com* and*Teatromadrid.com.*

II.11.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

According to Minority Rights Group International, Spanish society enjoys significant awareness around minority rights, particularly around the rights of linguistic minorities, which are enshrined in law despite calls for the Government to go even further. However Spain's Roma population, which is the largest in Western Europe, remains marginalised (Minority Rights). The European Institute for Gender Equality placed Spain in 9th place in Europe in 2019 (Gender Equality Index), and the country is 8th out of 49 in IGLA's European rankings for 2021, a testimony to Spain's efforts towards LGBTQI+ rights.

The Spanish parliament passed an Equality Act in 2007 which focuses mainly on gender, prompting many theatres, such as the Teatro Español and the Centro Dramático Nacional, to include in their programmes an equal number of women authors, directors, and actors as men. No similar policy has been adopted in the theatre field to ensure better representation of other minorities.

Despite the lack of leadership from state arts funding and other organisations in the field, awareness of EDI issues was quite high among our respondents. Respondents thought that women, people of colour and disabled people were at a particular disadvantage in Spain: 58.5% of respondents thought that women playwrights do not have equal opportunities; 65.5% thought playwrights of colour do not have equal opportunities; and 60% thought disabled playwrights do not have equal opportunities in Spain. However, 62% thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights have equal opportunities.

Only 34% of our respondents knew of any government policies, funding body or activist campaigns to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in Spanish theatre. Some of the named organisations were: The Black View, an association of actors of colour; Tinta negra, an activist collective aimed at increasing the representation of people of colour in plays; Dones i cultura, a Catalan activist collective aimed at increasing the representation of women in theatre and other cultural fields; Afrofeminas, a theatre company run by women of colour; and Dona'm Escena, a feminist collective that also monitors yearly gender equality data in Catalan theatre and arts; Clasicas y Modernas and Marias Guerreras, two organisation promoting the work of women in the arts and theatre. One expert commented: 'Actors, more than playwrights, are currently fighting for representation in Spain. There are more actors of colour than playwrights: we have Cuban, Chilean, Mexican, Argentinian actors. In Spain, cultural appropriation is not a very well-known concept in theatre, it is more known in dance and music.'

II.11.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

'Have your plays translated (at least into English). And be sure it's a good translation!'
'Send your plays to Sala Beckett!'
'Find local actors and directors and pitch your play to them!'

II.12 United Kingdom

The UK has one of the most established and supportive playwriting cultures among the countries we surveyed. Despite English-language authors being among the most translated in every other country, British theatre does quite badly at making space for foreign-language authors. One of the key strengths of the UK system on the international stage is the sheer influence and prestige associated with its cultural products. This cultural and symbolic capital supports the sector by attracting tourist audiences to UK theatres, creating demand for UK plays in translation and international tours of UK productions. Despite the UK's cultural spending and subsidies for the theatre being low compared to other countries such as France and Germany, playwriting has remained a viable business – at least before the coronavirus pandemic hit – because venues can count on relatively high ticket revenues.

100% of respondents were confident that UK theatres 'regularly' or at least 'sometimes' programme contemporary plays: the UK had the highest percentage of confidence in the popularity of the field out of all the countries we surveyed. Just over half of respondents believe that 'most' UK audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays written in English, and nearly all remaining respondents think at least 'some' are. With regard to contemporary plays in translation, respondents are split equally between two large groups

(35% each) affirming either that ‘some’ audiences and makers are interested, or that ‘generally they are not.’

II.12.1 Key Players

The main centres for contemporary playwriting in England are located in London and a few other big cities, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle and Stratford-upon-Avon. In Scotland, the main centres are Edinburgh and Glasgow. Cardiff and Belfast are the main centres in Wales and Northern Ireland. In London, several venues are almost exclusively dedicated to new plays: the Royal Court Theatre, the Bush Theatre, Theatre503 and the Hampstead Theatre.

Besides this, virtually all major subsidised venues and some commercial venues programme contemporary playwriting, including: the National Theatre, the Almeida, the Young Vic, the Old Vic, the Yard, the Arcola, the Gate, the Kiln, the Finborough, the Donmar Warehouse, the Lyric Hammersmith, the Theatre Royal Stratford East, Soho Theatre, the Globe, the Bridge Theatre and the Orange Tree Theatre. The Unicorn also programmes some new plays but only for young people.

Other significant venues around the country are the Traverse (Edinburgh), the Tron and the Citizens Theatre (Glasgow), the Royal Exchange (Manchester), the Birmingham Rep, Sheffield Theatre (The Crucible), the Bristol Old Vic, Plymouth Theatre Royal, the Lyric Theatre (Belfast) and Sherman Theatre (Cardiff). The Edinburgh Festival, Chichester Festival, Brighton Festival, London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) and Vault Festival in London all showcase new plays.

II.12.2 Systems and Practical Conventions

Funding and Income Opportunities

State theatre funding. In the past fifteen years, the UK has spent less than France and Germany on culture, both proportionally as a share of GDP and in absolute terms, despite having the second largest GDP in Europe after Germany (Budapest Observatory 11). This is because the arts are expected to be run like businesses in a market economy – and theatre is no exception. As a result of high customer demand and offer, competition between venues is stark. According to the majority of our respondents, the most established playwrights in the UK can sustain themselves through playwriting alone, but most tend to have second jobs.

Commissioning practices and playwright fees. The UK has an established commissioning and sourcing system for new plays, with most venues and companies having a ‘literary department.’ British literary managers are similar to German resident dramaturgs, in that they evaluate and select plays and establish relationships with writers and directors, but in the UK literary managers are less involved in practice and rehearsals than German dramaturgs). The wealthiest and most established theatres will allocate a share of their annual budget to commissioning new plays from the authors they are interested in, and which they think better suit their audiences’ tastes and needs. It is understood that only a fraction of all commissions will actually be selected for full productions, but the commissioning fees – ranging from £5,000 to £20,000 depending on context – constitute a sizeable proportion of a professional writer’s income. For a new play that has not been commissioned, fees range between £6,000

and £8,000. If commissioned plays turn out to be inappropriate for the commissioning venue, they can be sold or passed on to other venues.

Translator fees. Translator fees in the UK vary widely, and it is difficult to generalise. However, it is possible to generalise for three tiers: fringe productions, the subsidised sector and the commercial sector. For fringe productions, translators can earn between £0 and £1,000, plus a share of 10% of copyright split with the author at a ratio of 30/70, 40/60 or – very rarely – 50/50. For major subsidised productions, our experts told us that translators can expect to be paid between £1,500–£5,000 to author the version of a script that will form the basis of rehearsals for a production, plus about 10% of gross box office split with the original author. Some UK theatres commission 'literal' translations of foreign plays that form the basis for further creative work by an adaptor (usually a local playwright who does not speak the foreign language). When a 'literal' is commissioned, the translator is offered a small fee, usually around £1,000, which includes a copyright buyout. For commercial productions, translators can earn between £5,000 and £10,000. If a new production happens to be a new translation of a classic or of a new play, this will be paid up to £10,000 by the most established subsidised and commercial theatres.

Length of runs and touring. Royalties at 10% of box office income provide substantial additional income as most new plays stay on for an average of 4 weeks, with the most successful ones being eligible for so-called 'West End transfers,' whereby a subsidised production extends its run in a for-profit venue in London's commercial theatre district, the West End, though often with different casts. These extended runs can go on for months and even years (for instance, Lucy Prebble's *Enron* and Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem*were seen in the West End for several years). Occasionally, after West End transfers, productions of plays by local living playwrights go on tour within the UK (for instance, *Enron* toured nationally), and the most successful new plays can tour internationally (for instance, Enron toured to New York and then to Australia; Arinzé Kene's *Misty* toured the U.S.).

Exchange with other media. Many if not most established British playwrights also write for other media, such as TV, film or radio, and an exchange between media among writers and actors is the norm – less so for designers, directors and producers. Contemporary radio plays, especially written for this medium, are often programmed on UK stations, such as BBC Radio 4, which has an extensive programme of commissions.

Bursaries and residencies. Bursaries are made available – mostly to local playwrights, rarely to international writers – by a wide array of charitable and state organisations, such as the Arts Councils, and from venues themselves – it is impossible to list them all. The most prestigious residencies are run by the Royal Court Theatre and have recently included the International Residency and the International Climate Crisis Residency (which are not held regularly, but as and when funding becomes available). The Court also offers fellowships, awards, writers' groups and mentorship opportunities for first-time, young and emerging UK-based writers.

Gatekeeping and Support Structures

Gatekeepers. Most British theatres have dedicated literary departments, or at least literary managers, who consider new plays by British or English-speaking authors – and sometimes by foreign-language writers too. Literary managers (or literary teams) work with artistic

directors to select new plays for each season and match them with directors. As such, literary departments and artistic directors have joint power to decide which writers to promote.

Agents and professional organisations. UK playwrights are generally represented by agents, who negotiate writers' contracts and have a key role in promoting their clients with organisations looking for new work of a particular kind – yet the primary relationship remains that of the playwright with the venue, director or company. Most agents and many theatres also operate an open submissions policy, whereby unsolicited scripts from writers are encouraged, but these do not have a very high success rate. Some of the most prestigious agencies, for both local and foreign playwrights, are Casarotto Ramsay, Curtis Brown, United Agents, The Agency, Judy Daish, Rochelle Stevens, Berlin Associates, David Higham Associates, Brennan Artists, Julia Tyrell, Independent Talent, Felicity Blunt and JTM. However, it is possible for a playwright to have a career in theatre, particularly at the beginning, without an agent. The Writers' Guild is also an important organisation in the UK, functioning as a union representing the rights of the playwriting profession.

Prizes. The UK boasts an innumerable selection of prizes available for playwrights. The most prestigious theatre awards for play productions in the UK are the Olivier Awards, which include a category for Best New Play. Other prestigious awards for new play productions include the Critics' Circle Theatre Awards, the Evening Standard Theatre Awards and the Offies – where productions of translated plays are also eligible. There are also prizes for plays that have not yet received a production, the most highly regarded of which is the Bruntwood Prize, which offers a first prize of £16,000 and has a section for international playwrights from Canada, the U.S. and Australia.

Other prizes each come with their own eligibility rules, such as the Papatango New Writing Prize, the Playwrights' Studio's New Playwrights Awards, the Soho Theatre's Verity Bargate Award, Theatre503 International Playwriting Award, the Nicke Darke Award and the Alfred Fagon Award. The only competitions that are open to writers working in foreign languages are the BBC World Service/British Council International Radio Playwriting Competition (which results in a BBC radio commission), the Theatre503's International Playwriting Award (which offers a production at the tiny, yet hugely influential fringe theatre) and the EuroDram selection (which only offers a recommendation for production and publication). Very few prizes exist for translated plays, and they tend to be literary translation prizes rather than theatre prizes.

Education, Publishing and Press

Higher education. At higher education level, practical playwriting courses leading to a qualification are available in drama schools and universities. For instance, the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, a conservatoire attached to the University of London, offers a practical BA Writing for Performance (not just traditional 'plays') and an MA/MFA Writing for Theatre and Broadcast Media; the Drama Centre at Central Saint Martin's, attached to the University of the Arts London, offers an MA in Dramatic Writing which also focuses on various media, such as theatre, screen and radio. Other University departments, such as those at Goldsmiths, University of East Anglia, Edinburgh and Bristol, offer practical MA courses in dramaturgy, playwriting or creative writing with a performance pathway, that are highly regarded by the industry. The Universities of Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh Napier, St. Andrews, Bristol and York also offer practical playwriting courses.

Publishing. Plays are often published as books or programme texts, especially if the run is long enough to guarantee enough sales. There is a relatively sizeable market for contemporary scripts in the UK, given the cultural custom to buy the script when seeing a production and the widespread habit of reading and collecting plays among theatre-makers, students and some audiences. Dedicated independent publishers specialising in theatre and play script publications are rapidly disappearing, but one of the last to stand is Nick Hern Books, who also manage copyright for some plays. Prestigious general publishers that also do plays are Faber & Faber and Bloomsbury (through the prestigious Methuen Drama imprint, and the recently acquired Oberon Books), while Aurora Metro Books are much smaller and publish some unperformed translated drama. Most new plays presented in subsidized theatres are published and sold at the venue from the premiere for the entire run. Very few plays by foreign playwrights are published in the UK, and these tend to coincide with those foreign plays that are staged professionally in prestigious theatres.

Press. Reviews and features about contemporary plays are regularly published in the general press, such as national newspapers, though space and frequency are rapidly diminishing, due to smaller budgets for theatre reviewers. National newspapers covering contemporary playwriting include *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Telegraph*, *The Financial Times*, *The Independent*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and *The Observer*. Contemporary plays feature regularly in theatre-focused publications, such as culture and theatre magazines and webzines, such as *Time Out*, *The Stage*, and webzines *Exeunt*, *WhatsOnStage*, *British Theatre Guide*, *Critics of Colour*, *Disability Arts Online*, *The Theatre Times* and *A Younger Theatre*, as well as more generally culture-focused online publications with a section devoted to theatre, such as *The Arts Desk.* Audience development, education and public engagement activities are high on the agenda of most theatre organisations.

II.12.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The UK continues to be shaped by its history of colonialism, which has resulted in ethnic minorities being disproportionally affected by poverty and social exclusion, yet public debates on these topics are ubiquitous and awareness of EDI among the general public is high (Minority Rights Group International, UK). Despite having one of the most advanced law systems to protect citizens from discrimination against protected characteristics in Europe, the Equality Act 2010, racial discrimination in the UK is still rife (European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination, 2019). The European Institute for Gender Equality ranked the UK 5th in the EU in 2019 (UK - Gender Equality Index). The IGLA placed the UK 10th out of 49 countries in Europe for the state of LGBTQI+ rights.

Most respondents agreed that discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality, ability and race is embedded in theatre and arts practice in general, yet I would argue this does not necessarily mean that minorities in the UK suffer from higher levels of discrimination than in other European contexts. Equality, diversity and inclusion are constantly on the news in the UK, both in the general and in the theatre press, and as a result our UK-based respondents had a very high level of awareness around EDI issues. The theatre sector is an active participant in campaigns to counter any form of prejudice, especially in the past decade. Arts-focused activist campaigns have been drivers of change, while state arts funding bodies (Arts Council England, Arts Council Wales; Creative Scotland; Arts Council Northern Ireland) have in the past ten years started to promote and monitor diversity in the organisations they fund, distributing resources based on how proactive organisations are on the diversity front,

without setting any diversity quotas. For Arts Council England, in particular, EDI is currently covered within the 'Inclusivity & Relevance' assessment criterion, which is one of four investment principles guiding the distribution of state funding. Every organisation is expected to demonstrate how they are 'relevant' to all end-users (Arts Council England, 2021). For our respondents, the theatres most engaged with these struggles are the Royal Court, Young Vic and the National Theatre in London.

On the issue of access to equal opportunities, over 64% of respondents thought that women playwrights do not have equal opportunities in the UK. Over 64% of respondents thought that playwrights of colour do not have equal opportunities in the UK. 50% of respondents thought that LGBTQ+ playwrights do not have equal opportunities in the UK. Over 71% thought playwrights identifying as disabled do not have equal opportunities in the UK.

78.6% of our respondents were aware of government policies, funding bodies or activist campaigns to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in the theatre industry. Examples mentioned were Common (a charity promoting intersectional diversity in theatre); Bectu (a film, TV and theatre union promoting anti-discrimination values); the Jerwood Foundation (which offers philanthropic funding for theatre); Tonic (a charity focusing on gender equality in theatre), the Act For Change Project (an organisation promoting greater representation of diversity across the theatre sector); MGCfutures (Michael Grandage Company's charitable foundation offering mentorships and career advice for young people); Black Ticket Project (sourcing free tickets for young black first-time theatre goers); Sour Lemons (an anti-racism organisation which has recently closed, following the establishment of partnerships with the Young Vic and Royal Court theatres to create environments hostile to racism, and renamed The What If Experiment); Ramps on the Moon (an organisation aiming to normalise the presence of deaf and disabled people on an off stage); Stage Sight (an organisation promoting inclusive representation in theatre's workforce); and Gendered Intelligence (a charity that aims to increase understandings of gender diversity and improve trans people's quality of life).

42.9% of respondents were aware of organisations monitoring progress in EDI. The Arts Councils issue a diversity report every year. Other organisations also report on diversity in the sector, such as the Audience Agency and Purple Seven (two charities helping theatre organisations with audience development); Sphynx Theatre reports on gender inequalities regarding female roles and Victoria Sadler writes an annual blog about female playwrights. One expert pointed out how, increasingly, there is an awareness in the sector that diversity initiatives are not effective against racial discrimination and, instead, what is needed is a much more radical system change to counter and overthrow institutional racism.

II.12.4 Advice for Foreign Playwrights

'Do your research: don't try and sell a painting to a butcher's shop!'
'Send your script, translated into English, to the Royal Court or the Gate Theatre, or better still, to the many UK-based companies that focus on international plays in translation.'
'Contact your cultural attaché in London.'
'Have your script translated by a professional theatre translator who knows the theatre system in the UK If the translation is bad, it will have less than zero chance against those written by English-language playwrights.'

II.13 Conclusion: Best Practices

The aim of this report was to map, evaluate and compare current practices and conventions around contemporary playwriting and theatre translation practices in various European nations, and to see where the field as a whole could learn from local contexts. In this brief conclusion, I list the practices that were highlighted in my conversations with Fabulamundi partners as being essential to creating a sustainable field. These best practices can be found in some – but not all – contexts and have emerged as pivotal in creating a supportive culture where contemporary playwriting and theatre translation can thrive.

With regards to gatekeeping and support structures:

- dedicated literary/dramaturgy departments in venues and companies, such as in the UK, Germany and Austria, supporting the work of artistic directors with dedicated resources and expertise in selecting, establishing and cultivating relationships with writers;
- sustained and ongoing commissioning practices whereby venues see it as their mission to nurture and develop artists, especially cultivating the work of young authors, such as in the UK and Germany;
- established state organisations to fund, develop and support the field of theatre including playwriting, such as the French ARTCENA;
- dedicated professional associations or commercial agencies negotiating contracts on playwrights' and translators' behalf, such as the German publishers or British agencies;
- dedicated professional organisations and authors' societies promoting the work of playwrights and translators and offering development and networking opportunities, such as the Czech Aura-Pont and Dilia or the Spanish Asociación de Autores de Teatro or the British Writers' Guild;
- dedicated structures, institutions or opportunities whose mission it is to select and commission speculative play translations, such as France's reading committees and the Maison Antoine Vitez, and to encourage these to be staged by venues;
- dedicated prizes, paid residencies and bursaries to support playwrights' and translators' creative periods;

In terms of funding and income opportunities:

- sustainable length of run and/or total number of performances per production, so that energies and resources are not spent on short-term projects with no future touring opportunities to hope for;
- sustainable fee and share of copyright levels for playwrights and theatre translators (depending on cost of life and local ticket prices), especially avoiding the model whereby playwrights take all the risk by being paid through share of box office only;
- sustained touring opportunities for productions at national and international level, so that investments to create a production do not exhaust themselves in short runs with no future;
- widespread opportunities for playwrights to work in TV, film and radio, fostering a culture whereby theatre, radio, film and television industries talk to one another to innovate;

In the fields of education and public engagement:

- dedicated playwriting courses in higher education leading to qualifications in playwriting;

- specialist literary and theatre translation courses in higher education, along with further education and further professional development opportunities with a focus on theatre translation practice;
- playwriting and theatre translation courses and workshops for young people in primary and secondary schools;
- theatre and playwriting practice offered as curricular or extra-curricular activity in primary and secondary schools;
- targeted audience development activities with young people and the general public to engage the theatre-makers and theatregoers of tomorrow.

All of the above best practices concern systems of support at national level. However, many partners suggested that the field needs systems or organisations that operate transnationally. The main suggestions were the establishment of a permanent, wider network of venues and festivals, like Fabulamundi, or the creation of a dedicated European Agency for Playwriting and Theatre Translation, utilising the model of France's Maison Antoine Vitez, in order to fund expert reading groups and support a programme of speculative translations from and into as many languages as possible. Transnational organisations committed to supporting playwriting and theatre translation would make it easier for Europe-based theatre-makers and organisers to share stories and ways of articulating the world through theatre, actively contributing to better representation and inclusion of diverse voices across European stages. We hope that, one day, in the not so distant future, this organisation may become a reality.

In terms of EDI, it is fair to say that countries are engaging with EDI debates at different speeds and find themselves in different situations because of their histories, politics and socio-economic conditions. Most Fabulamundi partners agreed that a lot more needed to be done in each country to ensure equality of opportunities for playwrights who identify as women, ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTQ community, and disabled. Positive action to be taken included improving the representation of marginalised identities in positions of power and in every theatre-related profession; combating stereotypes on and off stage, particularly racism, transphobia, homophobia, ablism and misogyny; embedding EDI in arts funding; partnering with activists and campaigners to improve equality in specific sub-fields; investing in the education of new generations in order to build awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion in tomorrow's theatre-makers and audiences. We hope this study will be a contribution towards building a more equal, inclusive and diverse future for European theatre.

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For A Common Cultural Space: A Conversation with Lejla Kalamujic and Tanja Sljivar about Playwriting in Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro

In this conversation, playwrights Lejla Kalamujic and Tanja Sljivar talk about Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro as a single cultural space. Connected by common histories, practices, horizons and traumas, and of course by the same language, theatre-makers and writers within these countries refuse to see national borders as walls or impediments, instead navigating the absurdity of these new boundaries with a mixture of disdain and humour. They also discuss changing attitudes around equality and inclusion, and the debates slowly emerging in the public sphere. This conversation took place on 10 June 2021.

Margherita Laera
Tanja, you work as a director, dramaturg and playwright in Belgrade, Serbia, and Lejla you work as a novelist and dramatist in Sarajevo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. How would you describe contemporary playwriting culture in your countries?

Tanja Sljivar
To answer this question, we have to start from the Yugoslav times. After World War II, there was this important playwriting award in Serbia, the Sterija Award, which was attached to a festival in Novi Sad. It had been established at the same time as other big prizes, such as the NIN award for novelists, and the Pula Film Award, which was awarded to artists to enhance the idea of common Yugoslav culture. Unfortunately, these prizes were mostly awarded to Serbian men, but they were established to enhance the idea of a common cultural space. Because they have a different language, Slovenia and Macedonia were always a bit on the margin of these exchanges. But I consider these four countries, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia, where we really share the language which we speak and in which we write, as the field in which I operate. I feel that I couldn't separate one of those countries from the others, although now their official languages have different names and so on.

Today there is one playwriting award that includes all of these countries and other post Yugoslav countries like Kosovo. It is called Heartefact, and the fund awarding it is based in Belgrade. This award is for new plays that have not been staged and concentrates on political and socially engaged theatre. I would say that we have a vivid scene in Belgrade. We try to support each other. We often develop projects together where we also try to question our positions as writers, so we perform, we direct, and our roles are a bit more fluid. Things are happening, and not only in Belgrade, but in all of these cities, and somehow that we still maintain contact between capitals at least.

Lejla Kalamujic
I agree with Tanja, but in Bosnia we had this really big break during the War. Something that is still going and that was happening before the war is the MESS International Theatre Festival. It has a long tradition. The Art Academy is a new thing, something that was developed only after the war, but we are all connected across these new national boundaries.

ML

Who are the big players, then, in this common cultural space? Are there any other theatres or festivals, other than MESS, that showcase contemporary playwriting?

LK
I think that here in Sarajevo, especially, it's really hard for contemporary writers in theatre because I know many people who write plays, but not many of them are staged. Theatre venues do not stage new plays. Tanja, did you have any play of yours staged here in Sarajevo? I know you had one in Zenica at the Bosnian National Theatre. I also had one staged in Zenica, which is a little bit smaller than Sarajevo. But here in Sarajevo I don't think that they are so open towards the new plays and new authors, especially younger ones.

TS
Yes, I think it's worth mentioning the Festival of Bosnian-Herzegovinian Drama in Zenica and the organizing institution in the same city, the Bosnian National Theatre, which was actually the biggest theatre in Yugoslavia. Yes, theatre in Zenica staged two of my plays – *We Are the Ones Our Parents Warned Us About* and *Scratching or How my Grandmother Killed Herself* – and they also invited two other plays of mine for the festival, *All Adventurous Women Do* and *But the City has Protected Me*. They established this festival about twenty years ago and they also have an award for Best Play, which is not financial, but it's annual. So, in this sense, they are trying to instill a culture around new playwriting. I think that we now have some continuity, and there is a specific place where it's happening. The festival award is for plays that have already been staged, so they invite a selection of theatre productions, and they don't necessarily have to be produced in Bosnia. They also try to bring some international work, at least from Serbia and Croatia so it helps build a community and a discourse to enable people to meet, so it's a positive thing.

ML
So the work doesn't have to be performed in Bosnia, but does it have to be written in a particular language? Or can it be any language in the region?

LK
In Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro, actually, we have the same language, but plays in translation don't qualify, so the plays cannot be from Macedonia or Slovenia, for instance. And you have to have some connection to Bosnia. For instance, my friend Igor Štiks lives in Belgrade, but he was born in Bosnia. So they always invite his plays, even if they are produced in Serbia. You were born in Bosnia too, Tanja, right?

TS
Yes. I would say that the politics here are quite absurd. It gets complicated in the case of all these awards that I mentioned before, because it's very difficult to define and distinguish these languages because they're really not languages, they are a single language. Some things about people's identities are assumed, without even asking them. It's the same for me and Igor Štiks. We both have Bosnian and Serbian passports. We both live in Belgrade, and we were both born in Bosnia, so we have that connection to Bosnia. But, for example, for the Sterijino Pozorje Festival in Serbia, which was the biggest common festival and linked to the Sterija Awards, big Yugoslav writers such as Miroslav Krleža and Dušan Jovanović, who spent most of his life in

Slovenia, were invited and they won several awards before the War. And now the Sterija Awards are now only given to Serbian plays. Same for the Pula Film Festival, which is now in Croatia – they only consider Croatian films. But for me these concepts, like 'Croatian film' or 'Serbian play', I'm sorry, but they're almost non-existent, because it's such a small market. It's very difficult to produce films only in Croatia with only Croatian people. The same goes for Serbian plays. I was invited several times to the Sterijino Pozorje Festival because they assumed I wrote in Serbian, although actually if you really look closely, I write in Bosnian, but whatever, it's just very stupid. But then Igor was not invited, although the play was produced in Serbia, and the curator even said in an interview 'Igor is not our writer'. That's absurd. But you know, he and I write in basically the same dialect, as I said, we have completely the same circumstances, and someone just simply understands that I am writing in Serbian, or that I see myself as Serbian, which I have never said. It's pure insanity, but somehow I still manage to work in both countries without too many problems.

ML
That's good to hear. You were saying it's hard for writers to make a living. Can you then contextualise this within the theatre scene in general? Is it hard because it's hard for everyone to make a living in theatre, or is it because there's it's particularly difficult for playwrights?

LK
The main problem, after the war especially, is that we are still a very poor country and there isn't money for culture at all. So that's the main problem. And then the money they have gets spent on what the theatre venues produce, because everything is political. Here, if you want to run a theatre, you need to be involved in politics. I cannot say that they don't produce cotemporary texts, because they do. And occasionally good things happen. But there is no bigger plan or strategy. It's just one off, from one case to another, and it's really hard.

TS
I would say that there's also an additional problem, which is the pay gap between directors and writers. This is becoming a huge issue. I also worked as an Artistic Director of the National Theatre in Belgrade for one year and I had the opportunity to see contracts being issued. These were not individual contracts, these were general ones, and I saw the fees that we would give directors and writers for their work. I would say that directors' fees are at least double as much as the playwrights' fees and sometimes even five times higher. Actors and directors also have opportunities to be employed by a theatre. In Serbia, state theatres employ as many as 4 directors and 60 actors, which is unimaginable for writers or dramaturgs. You could have one or two dramaturgs employed by a theatre, but some theatres don't have dramaturgs at all, especially in provincial cities, and writers are never employed. Together with some colleagues from Belgrade, I tried to work out a standard freelance contract for playwrights, because this has already been done in Croatia with great success. The Croatian Writers' Guild, which is like a trade union, have published their own standard price list so that there is a minimum wage for any type of work that a playwright, dramaturg or script writer could do. Royalties are sometimes not even paid out.

ML
Where do you learn to be a writer in the region?

LK
There are new Academies everywhere, in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Banja Luka. There is a linguistic misconception that separates the Anglo-Saxon and German systems. We call these departments 'dramaturgy departments', but actually what they do is called 'playwriting and screenwriting' in English. There are a lot of people who are getting educated in schools to become dramaturgs, playwrights and screenwriters. We are over-catering these small markets. And then of course some of them would take jobs for whatever price, they would give away a text for €500, which is unacceptable, even in these four countries, because of course, we want to get staged, but we need money. And this is making the imbalance between the stars who get their own contracts and the new kids on the block even bigger. The market is completely deregulated.

ML
How do theatres source these new texts? Do they accept and read unsolicited scripts? Is there a commissioning tradition?

LK
Every theatre here has an in-house dramaturg and it's his or her job to receive new texts, to read them and recommend them. As I heard from many sources, they don't always read scripts, so I'm not sure. I think only in Zenica, they read everything they receive, but the others I'm not so sure. And I cannot tell you how they select one or the other. I'm not sure what kind of practices they have. I know that sometimes directors recommend some text, or they come and say I want to do this one. But I don't think that there is a clear system, it's like a grey zone.

TS
There is one Belgrade theatre that historically has been focusing on contemporary drama, Atelje 212, which was connected to BITEF Festival and the theatre avantgarde before the War. They staged two of my plays: *How Much is Paté?* and *Regime of Love* and they commissioned the latter. They have recently appointed a new in-house dramaturg who is a colleague of ours, Dimitrije Kokanov, who is also a playwright. And they have this repertoire policy, that they commission contemporary playwrights, not only from Serbia. Sometimes a good person in a good position can help, and they can make a small impact. When I was working at the National Theatre of Belgrade – even if I was working on productions that had already been agreed by my predecessor – of course we had to focus on staging classical pieces, European plays, and not only contemporary. When I was working there, we commissioned the playwright Melina Marković but it's not really a clear path. And I understand this position. As Artistic Director, you get so many completely inappropriate script submissions from non-professional writers.

ML
You mentioned European writers. Do you see many contemporary European texts or, or even international texts from other countries being staged in translation?

LK
I think that mostly it's up to directors to choose the plays. So they're coming with the text they want to do but then it's also not systematic. I don't think we have a theatre in Sarajevo that is

dedicated to contemporary playwriting. Every venue does a bit of everything, including international work. We have some contemporary foreign authors, but not regularly.

TS

I don't think that there is a consistent politics around this but there are initiatives to get international authors translated, and here we have to go back to the common language issue. The whole book trade field in post-Yugoslav countries is eroded by this misconception that there are these different languages. Because, for example, let's say a contemporary French play gets translated into Croatian – everyone in Serbia could read it too, so there is no need to do it again. It's normally done very poorly, sometimes you even have this really bad practice where a Croatian translator translates the text and then someone would just do a small adaptation of this translation for a Serbian publisher. This happens a lot in literature field. Sometimes the results are really appalling. And this happens also in in all of the language combinations and directions. So I think theatre practitioners don't really have a proper overview of what has been translated into the common language, so that they could maybe translate something else and then have a wider input in this sense.

And secondly, similarly to playwrights, translators receive really low fees for very complicated and important work. And sometimes translators do it just out of personal interest. In Serbia, there is Bojana Denić with her own publishing house: she she's one of the best translators from German. She worked with the Belgrade Drama Theatre and they staged many German playwrights, like Bonn Park, who is very popular now in Germany. They also published three volumes of post-war German playwriting. There is also Nikolina Židek, who translates from Croatian and all the languages into Spanish, and vice versa. She published a collection of contemporary Spanish plays. Gabriela Abrasowicz translates the plays from all variants of our language into Polish. So sometimes these people have many roles, they are translators and publishers and editors, and even agents sometimes. Very often it is based on their personal enthusiasm rather than developed cultural strategies. There is this network, Eurodram, which tries to have an overview, so we have a common Eurodram board for all the languages that we are mentioning. We are trying to get a database for what is being translated in both directions. But it is still messy.

ML

We mentioned identity politics, so can I ask you about the state of debates about equality? What are the discussions at the moment in Serbia and Bosnia, and in the other countries?

TS

We have a type of very specific kind of #metoo spin-off, which started happening in Serbia, but then it also reached Sarajevo and Zagreb. Young actresses accused their Acting Professor of sexual assault in a private secondary school, and then several other really prominent cultural workers and powerful men, actors or producers, were also accused. And now these debates started happening. But the prominent public debate is not about representation, it's not about the pay gap, it's not about the content of the plays, it's really just at the basic level… it's about harassment, assault, rape. And actually, the debate got to cultural structures and institutions, theatre schools, theatre venues and everything. So this has now really escalated from January 2021 onwards. And this might be an opportunity to also start talking about all the rest.

As for racial and religious equality, as you've seen these disputes about languages and so on are actually not helping anyone. I know that Meti Kamberi, a Romani writer has been nominated now for a NIN award with his novel *City of Pain* (Grad bola). And this was, to my knowledge, the first time that something like this happened, and he self-published his novel and you could only buy it by ordering it from him. But this is definitely not common at all, this is a total exception. Still, women get far fewer awards than men, especially in prose. Maybe in playwriting it's a tiny bit better, especially since Biljana Srbljanović started working in the 90s in Serbia and made a huge impact on European playwriting. She received about seven Sterija Awards, but this was also partly due to the fact that it became a Serbian-only award. Through Biljana Srbljanović and Milena Marković, there are more women. As for equality or sensitivity towards queer people or transgender people or towards people of colour, or any type of really serious inclusion, these debates haven't even started. Now we have this spin-off from #metoo, which is already great. It prompted at least questions about the type of education students are getting. If not physical, there is always some type of psychological torture in these traditional schools of theatre or film, there is this big authority figure who is a male professor and then there are the students who are his servants, basically. This is starting to be questioned, but all the rest is really beyond the discourse right now. Of course, there are queer writers, feminist writers, there are people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. Roma people are really not equal citizens in any sense, and they are also not really represented in official or state culture. But I would say that these topics get thematised, so we as writers started writing about these topics in our work, but this doesn't mean that structurally, the debate is happening, or that there is any type of inclusion. We bring these topics to attention through our plays but still, this is maybe the most progressive part of it. Sometime the plays don't even get staged or these topics are understood as fictional.

LK
I think people recognise me as a queer writer. When they called me from the Zenica Festival, I told my friends that they wanted to stage my play, *How I Killed My Family*. People were really surprised that they chose it because it's the Bosnian National Theatre of Zenica and it's not something common for them. But they were really open to that. The play is fictional, and it talks about our war, it's an epic story of the different members of a family, but it's also a play about my identity. And there wasn't any negative reaction on the topic there, but then the pandemic came and the play wasn't staged in Sarajevo. I'm not sure what would happen in other theatres, if people saw something like that, but they were really excited in Zenica. Maybe there are some steps in the right direction for queer writing here, but still, as Tanja said, for Roma people, I think it's really difficult, and they are not represented in our mainstream cultural scene. So things are changing, but very slowly.

ML
I really hope your play gets seen in Sarajevo and elsewhere. Thank you both.

Tanja Šljivar is Belgrade-based playwright interested in the role and position of the text in different media, formats and systems of representation. She studied playwriting and scriptwriting in Belgrade and applied theatre studies in Giessen. She writes across media and genre: screenplays, theatre plays, prose, librettos, texts for visual arts projects. Most recently she stared working on her debut novel, with a working title – *National Theatre: The Novel*.

Lejla Kalamujic is an award-winning queer writer from Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Call Me Esteban* received the Edo Budiša literary award in 2016 and it was the Bosnian-Herzegovinian nominee for the European Union Prize for Literature in the same year. She also published three plays *Ogress, or How I Killed My Family*, *Turn off the Lights* and *Hands full of Clouds*. Her stories and plays have been translated into several languages.

Representing Nordic Playwrights: A Conversation with Literary Agent Hinriikka Lindqvist about Playwriting in Finland

Nordic Drama Corner is a Helsinki-based drama agency which promotes Finnish playwrights in Finland and abroad and international dramatists in Finland. I spoke with CEO Hinriikka Lindqvist about the ways in which Nordic Drama Corner goes about creating opportunities for Finnish talent, how they fund translations from and into Finnish, and how the Finnish theatre establishment deal with the representation of traditionally underserved identities.

Margherita Laera
How would you describe playwriting culture in Finland?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
I think we have several quite talented playwrights, and they are very good at what they do. But I think one of the problems is that in Finland none of our playwrights receive a monthly salary to do their work. Play commission payments are the equivalent of a salary, and that's why the theatres play such an important role in the playwriting economy when they select texts for their programmes. If a playwright does not win the play commission lottery or if a small theatre doesn't have enough to pay for the whole play, usually the playwright has to apply for grants to do their work. Also, several of them work as directors, dramaturgs, teachers or they have another profession, just to pay their bills. But I think there we need more international connections with other writers and other playwrights around the world, and that's something that is still missing. Of course, we try our best to give all the playwrights we represent more connections. And this way, we have more possibilities for playwrights to improve their writing and talent, because it's quite hard in a small country where, you know, everybody knows everybody and everybody's reading everybody's plays.

Margherita Laera
You are the CEO of Nordic Drama Corner (NDC). Can you tell me about what you do?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
We represent Finnish and other Nordic playwrights. We take care of the copyright for them, so if anybody wants to stage any of the plays we represent, they call us. We also help theatres find new plays, even international ones, we give them new scripts from Britain, the States, Europe or other countries. If we know that there is a good play, either in Finnish or in any other language, we might approach somebody working in a theatre and say, 'Please read this. This is a good play'. We give them ideas to make their programmes as wide as possible. And then of course, we talk to the playwrights themselves. It really depends on the person: some of them just write plays, give them to us, and we try to do our best to sell them as much as possible. And then in other cases, some playwrights really want to be involved in the process more. So we ask them, 'What do you want from us?' I think the most important job is to help the playwrights do those things that they don't want to do, like write their contracts, negotiate the conditions, so that they get a good percentage of box office intake, or things like that.

Margherita Laera

Is Nordic Drama Corner a private company? Who owns it?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
Yes, we are a private company, unlike many other Finnish theatre organizations which are state-funded associations or charities. Nordic Drama Corner doesn't receive public grants from the government so it has to operate within the terms of the business world. However, the owners of the company are theatre organisations: STEFI, the Association of Finnish Theatres, of which many Finnish theatre organizations are members; and TNL, which is the official Association for Amateur and Professional Theatres in Finland; and a Norwegian company, Folin. Of course, the owners need the money and are happy if we make good business, but you know, we don't have to grow all the time, the owners understand the situation of the field and don't require higher and higher profits every year. I think it's quite a good system.

Margherita Laera
That's an interesting model. How does that change the way you operate?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
We are kind of in the middle, because of course we have to work as a business company, we have to earn the money, we can't give anything for free, otherwise we would be dying out. But I also think that when the owners are involved in the theatre business, the good thing is that when we do make money, it still goes to the theatre world. We also do lots of cooperation with several sub-agencies in different countries. Our main business partner is Nordiska, another agency based in Denmark, and we cooperate in everything because they are a local agency for Danish and Swedish authors. They have quite a similar business model to us. So, the good thing is that we have quite a wide representation for all the authors in Nordic and Scandinavian countries.

Margherita Laera
How is your business model different from that of drama agencies in other countries?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
I think it really depends not only on the country, but also on the company. We look after performing rights and of course, sometimes in film too, but we don't really deal with printing the play. We can negotiate the rights for the playwright and do our best to have more plays published, but we don't do the actual printing, like the big publisher-agencies in Germany. Plays are not published that much in Finland. We are actively marketing the texts in Finland with dramaturgs and artistic directors, but if we want to promote the plays abroad, we have to translate everything before we can actually sell anything. We have many playwrights who are successful abroad, for instance E. L. Karhu, Saara Turunen and Mika Myllyaho, to name a few. Of course, we can always write a synopsis and try to explain what the play is about. But I know that no theatre director will ever buy a play if they haven't been able to read it. If the play is ready, then we have to find somebody to finance the translation.

Margherita Laera
Who funds those translations then?

Hinriikka Lindqvist

Well, that's a good question. Initially they are funded by us, and then we try to recoup the investment. But the risks are quite huge with this approach. We have the state-funded Theatre Information Centre of Finland (TINFO), which offers support for translating plays that already have a signed contract abroad. So, if there is somebody who has already done the deal, then TINFO can support the translation, but they don't usually pay for the whole translation, only a few thousands. And it's always the translator who has to apply, not us. I am trying to find a new way to make more translations happen more easily. Because there are so many texts that we actually have to translate every year from Finnish into other languages. As for the translation of foreign plays into Finnish, we are such a small country, so it's not guaranteed that if a theatre wants to do a play in translation, for example, in Helsinki, that another theatre in another city will want to perform it again. Usually, the theatre that stages the Finnish premiere pays to the translation. But when talking about a Finnish play translated to other languages, most of the time, we try to first use English, because most theatres and theatre directors all over the world can read English. One exception is maybe Spanish-speaking countries, they actually need the text also in Spanish before they make their decision.

Margherita Laera
That's really interesting. It seems like Finnish translators are very well paid, because 'a few thousand Euros' doesn't ring true for theatre translators in many countries, to be honest.

Hinriikka Lindqvist
It really depends on the country. I think, for example, when comparing Finland to Sweden, which is next to us, they have even higher salaries. But it also depends on how experienced the translator is. But as we know, translating a play might take a few months. So, you should basically budget for a few months' salary. And when most of these translators are freelancers, so when comparing to the salary of somebody who is employed, it should be more than a monthly salary for an employee, because they have to pay all their taxes and insurance and healthcare and things like that.

Margherita Laera
What is the fee range to translate a play in Finland then?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
Again, it really depends on the translator. I know that some of them, especially those who don't really have many jobs to choose from, and who are at the beginning of their career, they might do a translation for €1,000 or €2,000 or something like that, but I personally think it's too little. I think that the minimum pay should be around €5,000-6,000 in order to appreciate the professional value of the translator. And if it's a musical, for example, then it's even more because all the songs and everything take longer and you need to have a good understanding of singing and music. Often we have two separate translators in musicals: one to translate the dialogue and the other to translate the lyrics.

Margherita Laera
What about translating international plays into Finnish? How do you select?

Hinriikka Lindqvist

We usually translate only those plays that are chosen to be staged, because we have a theatre that pays part of the translation, so it's easier. And sometimes, we take part in projects, where the money is actually coming from grants, and then we might be more open minded to translate totally different kinds of plays. I think it's also a responsibility of ours to show to the Finnish people that different kinds of plays exist, because not everything is like in Finland, or not everybody reads English or other languages. So I think it's important also to have all kinds of different texts translated, but that's not very common. Most of the time, a theatre wants to do a foreign play and it's not translated yet, or the translation is not that good – because translations get old. And so, we commission the translation.

Margherita Laera
What languages are the most translated into Finnish, would you say?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
I would say English. Yes, from Britain and the States. Some German and French too.
The best-known British authors, who are performed a lot in Finland, are for example Ray Cooney, Peter Quilter and the works of Henry Lewis, Henry Shields and Jonathan Sayer.
From the States, the best-known plays seem to be musicals and Ken Ludwig's plays.

Margherita Laera
Do you translate more from English than from, say, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
Yes. That's a pity, though. I'd be happy to balance the situation.

Margherita Laera
Is there a strong commissioning tradition in Finland, or is it rare for theatres to pay playwrights in advance?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
In-house dramaturgs or artistic directors often develop relationships with writers and if the theatre likes the style of a writer, or if they have a special theme they would like to present, they can commission a play. But then also at the same time, the author has the possibility to present some ideas to a theatre. Many playwrights and theatres get in touch with each other without me being involved. And if the theatre decides that they want to commission the play, then we make a contract for the commission. It basically says that the playwright has to finish the play by a certain date, and maybe has to send a set number of drafts by certain dates. And then also, the theatre has the right to do the premiere until a certain date, for example, let's say, within two years, and then if they don't open within two years, then the playwright has a right to keep the play commission payment, but also sell their play to other theatres. The fee can be anything from €3,500 upwards, depending on the author, the play and the schedule. And then before it gets staged, the theatres do another contract with us for the performing rights.

Margherita Laera
Thinking about your authors, how many of them are women? Are women well represented in in the playwright category?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
I'd have to check, but I think about half.

Margherita Laera
And do you think women writers have the same opportunities in Finland?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
I think so. I hope I'm not too optimistic, but I really think that they do nowadays. At least I try to do everything I can for them to have the same opportunities. Of course, as we know, it's not only about the text, and it's not only about whose texts I'm sending to the theatre directors. As long as many of the theatre directors are men, it might be possible that they choose texts that represent their perspective, and they may be written by male writers. But that's of course very stereotypical, not everyone is like that, many are also interested in different perspectives. I think that the problem is hopefully being solved little by little, and I really hope that women writers have the same chances as others. I don't really have any statistics about this, but it's a sensitive issue in Finland. I think everybody is paying attention, for example, if there was a theatre doing only plays written by men. Nowadays people will notice. At least people working in the theatre field are paying attention, hopefully increasingly every other audience member. It is not just a matter of the world of theatre, but more broadly of the structures of society that we seek to influence through the day-to-day activities of the agency.

Margherita Laera
What about authors that are openly gay, lesbians or trans? Are they represented?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
From my point of view, they have the same chances to have their plays represented, but I don't have statistics. I think that the bigger issue is representation on stage, actually. If somebody is writing about different genders, or different cultures or ethnicities, then the issue is who can actually play the character, who can be the right performer in that case. That has been a huge issue during the last year or so. And I think the theatres are very aware that this is something that they actually have to think about. I think that it's important that they think about representation as part of the production plan, and it shows things are improving.

Margherita Laera
Do you have many writers of Black and Global Majority background in your books?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
Not that many, unfortunately, no. This is also linked to selection criteria for schools in the field. The Theatre Academy which is part of the University of Arts in Helsinki is the only place where you can actually study to become a playwright in Finland at the moment, and they do not have many students of colour. So, I think it might take a while before we actually find different ethnic backgrounds equally represented in the professional field.

Margherita Laera
Would you say there are more actors who are from Black and Global Majority background?

Hinriikka Lindqvist
Well, there are not many, but yes, they are at least some. I think it’s also good that little by little, the theatres are starting to think that when they are staging a play, they might avoid dull and hurting stereotypes, and they also appreciate the accuracy of the representation. We had a huge case last year about one play that was staged at the Finnish National Theatre, which is an institution that everybody follows. So, the news and debates spread all around the country. In that case there was a trans woman performed by man. And that became a very big issue. It was a bit messy, and the theatre wasn’t prepared for it. I think that's also as an example of what the theatres don't want: they don’t want their casting to be questioned or considered hurtful. So if there is any chance that this kind of discussion may emerge, they want to be prepared. This drives the debate and promotes alternative casting choices, which I think will bring things forward little by little. Another significant minority in terms of representation and presentation in Finland is the Sámi population: it is important not only for the values of equality and respect for minorities, but also as part of our decolonization process, something that the art field will hopefully be increasingly aware of.

Margherita Laera
That's really great to hear that those conversations are starting. Thank you so much for your time.

Biography
Hinriikka Lindqvist is the CEO of Nordic Drama Corner. She studied Theatre Research, Arts Management, North American Studies, Communication and Business Management. She obtained an MA in Theatre Studies at Helsinki University in 2008. Before becoming an agent, Hinriikka worked for several years as a producer and Executive Director of theatre organisations, projects and communities in Finland and internationally.

From ‘Fuck Story’ to ‘Whose Story?’: A Conversation with Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson and Sigríður Jónsdóttir about Playwriting in Iceland

In this conversation, I spoke to Sigríður Jónsdóttir, lead critic for the Icelandic newspaper *Fréttablaðið*, and Iceland-born, Amsterdam-based playwright Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson. We discussed how Icelandic theatre system trains and supports playwrights, how dominant perceptions about audience taste shape theatre aesthetics, and how new ideas from abroad have influenced recent conversations in the theatre field. This conversation took place on 1 June 2021.

Margherita Laera
How would you describe the contemporary playwriting scene in Iceland?

Sigríður Jónsdóttir
Maybe I can start by mentioning some historical context. Our theatre history, in modern terms, is very short, and our professional theatre history is even shorter. It was only in 1950 that the National Theatre of Iceland opened and became a ‘professional’ theatre in the modern sense. Before that, theatre performances were mainly run by volunteers, people who had other jobs during the day or were part of the upper or upper middle class of Iceland and had time on their hands. That’s not to say that the quality wasn’t good, but obviously it meant that the professional framework simply wasn’t there. The Reykjavík Theatre Company has been around since the 1890s, now located at the Reykjavík City Theatre. We had a professional national repertory theatre built quite early, considering how poor the country was; building works started in the late 1920s and it finally opened in spring 1950. But considering the size of the population and the size of Reykjavík, it made a difference, and it had an impact on the professional theatre scene in Iceland. Up until quite recently, writers in Iceland weren’t trained as playwrights, they were trained as writers of novels and poetry. Technically, there haven't been that many full-time professional playwrights in the country. Many writers have other jobs, like lecturing, translating, etcetera. There are people who write plays, for sure, but they aren't many, and not a lot of them make a living out of it.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson
I have for some years now lived off playwriting alone. Sometimes I do some work in film as well – I just wrote a film script, because the idea sounded so much like a theatre piece that I said yes. In the Icelandic system, we have something called the ‘artist salary’, which you can apply for. However, I am probably the only one who gets money from that fund, exclusively for writing plays. In our theatres, we have standard contracts, each giving a playwright about €30.000 in total for a play, but the money is paid in six steps: from the concept idea to the first draft, second draft, rehearsal draft, first rehearsal and the last payment is on the day the play opens.

Since we are on the topic of ‘contemporary playwriting’, my friends in the marketing department tell me that they never use the following phrases when they market my plays: ‘Here is a new Icelandic play’ or, God forbid, ‘a contemporary play’. In Icelandic theatre marketing, these are swear words. Because people will think, ‘New plays are always terrible.’ So, I was always told never to talk of my work as ‘new plays’. I just communicate the idea for the play, that’s it – I don’t use swear words!

ML
What else would you say is the dominant perception around theatre audiences' taste in Iceland?

TT
They are relatively conservative, but open to new things if they are done exceptionally well. Many of the people who raised the funds, and later built the complex that now houses the Reykjavík City Theatre, were working class. Therefore, when you write for them, still today, you will feel that there is a requirement to write 'for the people', not too highbrow but entertaining, because the theatre belongs to the people. All social classes go to the theatre in Iceland, so it's a vibrant audience that I love writing for, even if they can be total arseholes too.

SJ
When the National Theatre opened, what they did was put together a series of Icelandic plays, to open the theatre, and one of them was an adaptation of a novel by Halldór Laxness, our Nobel Prize winning author. It was *Íslandsklukkan* (Iceland's Bell). This was done partly because Iceland simply didn't have a lot of presentable play texts. And it became a huge success. Consequently, every 10 years or so, we'll have an adaptation of one of his books. We are a novel-reading country, so they say, why not use the opportunity and put novels on the stage? In my view, that has taken away focus from actual plays. I've gotten into discussions about whether this type of work is to be considered contemporary playwriting or not – my sense is that it's not, it's very much adaptation. I'm not saying that adaptations are necessarily worse, or not comparable to contemporary plays. Some people in the literary scene in Iceland consider our literary adaptations as contemporary plays but this skews the view from both the audience's side and from the point of view of people who actually work on the productions. Because the marketing department will say something along the lines of 'new work' or, 'very exciting version of this famous author or novel', because people love going to see something that they know. They want to go and see an interpretation of something familiar.

ML
How do playwrights get their plays programmed in theatres? Do venues accept unsolicited scripts?

TT
You can send your play to a dramaturg, and it will get read. That's what happened to me in 2010. I'd written a play and then I'd sent it to the wonderful Hafliði Arngrímsson, the head dramaturg of the Reykjavík City Theatre, and he liked it. But the theatre didn't produce it, and instead they asked me to write a short one-act play, and gave me some money to do that, and then they staged it as part of an evening of three one acts. And mine was a bit of a small hit, so they kept giving me bigger and bigger opportunities. So, I would say it's not completely closed off. But it's tough, although The National Theatre is doing great things with young playwrights these days, they have a whole scheme that supports them and nurtures their talent.

SJ
And plus, a few years back the Reykjavík City Theatre started a 'playwright in residence' scheme that lasts for one year. A writer can get a salary for one season to take part in the regular theatre environment, with the aim of writing one play that they might produce, though they don't

commit to it. Currently, two are contracted instead of the usual one. The scheme is really admirable. And it gives new playwrights an actual chance to write perhaps a full-length play for the first time. I think it's really valuable as an experience, even though not every play gets produced, so theatres in Iceland should do more of it.

ML
Tyrfingur, how did you learn how to write a play?

TT
I studied at the Icelandic University of the Arts, which has an all-around theatre studies programme where students also do practice. Sigríður and I were there together, and we had teachers from the postmodern school, so we were not taught any technique, and technique was considered to be for losers, so there was a lot of, 'just express yourself'. So I graduated three years later, but I didn't know anything. Even though I had talent, I didn't know how to do anything. So then I applied for an MA Writing for Performance at Goldsmiths, in London. And I didn't study that much, I spent a lot of the time partying, but I did attend classes, and there was something about the way they talked about craftsmanship, and they kept saying that writing was actually hard work, it was not just me talking about my feelings. It was that discipline that kind of steered me back into the right direction. So from then on, I just kind of started doing it myself, studying and reading all the literature, from the Greeks to modern plays, I was able to teach myself how to do it, and go against what we were taught. So, now I write plays, but it's not about me and my feelings and it's not *for me*; writing is a type of alchemy or energy I create for the actors who then give it to the audience.

When Sigríður and I and the other millennials were studying, the mantra then was like, 'We don't need story anymore, we don't need structure', but then all of a sudden that shifted drastically and everything became about, 'Whose story should we be telling?' The story of black people? The story of gay, lesbian and trans people? You know, it stopped being 'Fuck story' and it became 'Whose story?' But you've got a whole generation coming from the Art Academies who don't know how to create a story. So all of a sudden, none of them have any chances of being staged, because they just didn't realise that they had to figure this out on their own or study some techniques. But the ultimate teacher, since I was a teenager, has been seeing live theatre all over Europe.

SJ
A lot of playwrights historically in Iceland have been self-taught or come from related academic backgrounds. And even the opportunities that are here now are quite convoluted, because there is an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Iceland, but it's hard to specialise. Every student will have a specialization, but you're taught a blend of many different genres, so then you'll sit in class with a person who's a poet, and a novelist, and playwright, all being taught by a script writer. That doesn't necessarily give you the tools that you need to write for the stage.

ML
What lessons have you both learned from going to university and to the theatre abroad?

TT

It's so interesting, because I was reading the overview of each country in your Fabulamundi Workbook report, and it made a lot of sense to me. It said that the UK is quite closed off – that's true, I've never had anything there. But then I've been invited to France on many occasions and most of my work has been translated into French. And then I was also in Poland, the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw did my play of mine on last winter online, *The Potato Eaters*, and they did it really well. I also love Polish theatre. I live in Amsterdam, and the theatre here is fantastic as well. Everyone has been very open to me here. So I would say, go and see everything – art, opera, theatre, performance art, dance – and remain open to learning.

SJ
I think that in Iceland, because it's an island in the middle of nowhere, you have to commit yourself to seeing foreign work. Because the theatre scene here is tiny. So everyone knows each other. And that sometimes is dangerous, especially now, with the COVID pandemic, I haven't been abroad for a year and a half. And you can just feel something atrophying inside because there's a need to see other types of work. There is some great work being produced in Iceland, but it's just important to get other perspectives. And I think that sometimes this is a lesson that Icelandic people take a little bit too long to learn. But those who are really committed will go abroad regularly.

ML
What about bringing back plays from abroad? Is there a market for contemporary foreign plays in Iceland?

SJ
There is, but a lot of it is restricted to the English language. British and American plays that have traditionally been translated regularly. However, there have also been other trends. For example, in the 90s, in the early 2000s, there was a lot of Scandinavian work being put on, and the 50s and 60s, there was a lot of interest in Austrian and German playwriting. And that's usually connected to somebody going there, somebody studying there and bringing this work back home. France is also featured, especially in the middle of the 20th century. And now, for example, at the National Theatre, they are showing the *Rhinoceros* by Ionesco on the big stage. So there is an undercurrent of both contemporary and classical plays that do get put on. But recently there has been quite a lot of focus on English-language plays.

TT
Some dramaturgs and artistic directors are trying to go against the Anglo-American trend, because people are kind of fed up with it, a lot of the plays that are translated from English are very similar and old-fashioned, maybe because British theatre never truly went through the 'fuck story' phase, which was incredibly important for playwrighting, it cleansed it of a lot of the go-to structure tools and clichés – flushed them out like an enema. So anyways, theatres have been trying to go against the Anglo-American trend for a while. But the thing is that a lot of people got their MAs in England, and some in America, so they only read English as a foreign language, and a British play will feel more familiar, and give them a sense of being a 'safer choice' than, let's say, an Italian play.

ML

Tyrfingur mentioned the question, ‘whose story is it?’ Is it a question that theatre people in Iceland ask? Or is it a question that you two have heard in the UK and US and then brought back with you?

SJ
I’ll start with an example. A few years ago, *A View From the Bridge* was produced in Iceland, it's about the Italian immigrant community in New York, but how do you engage with it without dressing up as people from other cultures? This has yet to be properly discussed in Iceland, on a proper academic level. The second and third generation of immigrants are now reaching adulthood and they're the ones that are starting the conversation. Another example, in 2016 the National Theatre decided to stage *Othello* as their Christmas production, traditionally the crown jewel of the theatre season. Othello was played by a white person and given a vaguely Eastern European background. And very few considered this problematic. I raised the issue, and nobody engaged in the conversation. This needs to be discussed and is being discussed in the independent scene. There is a small independent theatre venue called Tjarnarbíó in Reykjavík that does international work and is a lot more diverse than the bigger theatre venues. Recently, they hosted a play engaging with the Polish immigrant community in Iceland, and the company was a combination of Icelandic and Polish actors. And only last fall, an actress who is mixed-race and raised in Iceland from a young age, raised the flag and said ‘all the publicity for both big theatres only featured white actors, directors and writers’. And the artistic directors were like, ‘Well, thank you for pointing this out. This is embarrassing. We're going to have to do better’. I’m optimistic, but this is going to happen slowly. Additionally, there has always been a gender problem in Icelandic theatre, it’s mostly men who have been writing, and especially directing. But with more education, especially with more women going into directing, it’s changing, and now they are trying to have it 50/50 and I think they seem to be on the right path. And they are giving headliner jobs and the larger stage to women directors. There are still very few women playwrights. I think that's something that can definitely be changed. And the same goes for queer experience.

ML
Is gender equality more in the forefront of the EDI discourse in Iceland?

TT
Yes. And also, I would say, people of colour are not a very big minority in the country, but we have a lot of Polish migrants, who I would like to see more represented in theatre as well.

SJ
I think the issue is that Iceland’s University of the Arts is basically the gatekeeper school for actors in Iceland. If you want to get hired as an actor in Iceland, you pretty much have to go there. If you study your basic BA education abroad, then you're taking a chance. Because if you study at home, then you're better known, and you get to engage and network within the Icelandic society. It's sad but still true. And the problem is, for example, with representing diversity, that it depends on who they admit into the school. I don’t know what their admission process looks like, and I do think that they are trying to have a diverse group. But this is also what's clogging up the system.

ML
What about the LGBTQ community? Are they able to make it through the gatekeepers?

TT
I have to say, I don't know of any school in the world that has educated so few gay men as the Acting Department at the Art University in Iceland. It's been incredibly hetero, at least, you know, outwardly. I once spoke to a member on the selection committee who told me that a student who was openly gay was being rejected because one committee member thought he couldn't possibly play a straight character.

SJ
Same with other members of the queer community. There weren't many in our days, especially in the Acting Department. And I think it could possibly be just lack of imagination. You won't find a solution if you don't think that there's a problem. We're still very much in this transition phase, I think, with a lot of these conversations. For the past few years, the conversation has been dominated by the #metoo movement, to be honest. So that's been combined with the women's rights movement. Iceland usually tops the world's Gender Equality Index. And it's just nonsense – this is just not representative of what being a woman in Iceland feels like quite a lot of the time. I think that this mismatch is something that is still being dealt with. So, sadly, that takes away from other diversity discussions for the moment, even though they're equally as important.

ML
Now that theatres have reopened after the pandemic and we've all had time to reflect on what wasn't working before, what would be your number one priority for not going back the old normal?

TT
I'd really like rehearsal periods to be longer. And also, something else I know has been a big discussion in the National Theatre is to reduce the number of new productions per year by a third. I like that: more attention to quality than quantity. But mostly, we need more foreign influence – more contemporary European texts and more directors from abroad.

SJ
A lot of theatres and companies are trying to rethink their organizations from their bones, which I think was very necessary especially for the two bigger theatres. To take them into the 21st century, because these are conservative institutions, and it takes a lot of effort to change them.

ML
Thank you so much both.

Sigríður Jónsdóttir is the lead theatre critic at *Fréttabladid*, one of Iceland's biggest newspapers, and a performing arts specialist at the Theatre Museum of Iceland. She is a graduate of Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong, received an MA in Social Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh and a BA in Theatre and Performance Making from the Iceland University of the Arts. She has given lectures on theatre criticism, queer theatre and

cultural theory at the University of Iceland and the Iceland University of the Arts. Since 2018 Sigríður has been a member of the International Association of Theatre Critics.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson
Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson's award winning plays have been featured at Festival d'Avignon, La Mousson d'été and during Island, terre de théâtre at Théâtre 13 in Paris, in Chicago, Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw, by Compagnia Lacasadargilla in Rome, at The National Theatre of Iceland and The Reykjavík City Theatre. Tyrfingur has received seven Gríma nominations, the Icelandic Theatre awards, and won the award twice, including Play of the Year for *Helgi Comes Apart*. In the fall of 2018, *The Potato Eaters* was nominated for the Cultural Awards DV. Tyrfingur's plays have been translated into German, Polish, French, English, Italian and Dutch and published in France, the Netherlands and Iceland. *Seven Fairy Tales about Shame* will premiere on the big stage at The National Theatre of Iceland in February 2022. Tyrfingur lives in Amsterdam.

Cultivating Diversity Through Policy: A Conversation with Jenny Mijnhijmer About Playwriting in the Netherlands

In this conversation, Jenny Mijnhijmer speaks candidly about equality and inclusion in Dutch theatre. As the Theatre Secretary of the Dutch Performing Arts Fund, the state funding organisation responsible for theatre, music and dance, she is responsible for shaping and implementing funding policies in her country. As one of very few Black women in her field, she shoulders an enormous responsibility and has used her power to cultivate diversity and raise awareness about existing prejudice. Here, she expresses her frustrations about current levels of inertia and the pace of change, and shares her hopes for the future.

ML
Can you tell me about your organisation and what your role is within it?

JM
I'm the Theatre Secretary at the Dutch Performing Arts Fund, which is the biggest governmental fund for the arts in Holland, along with other Funds for other art forms. I started out studying English Literature and Theatre Studies. And then during my college years, I started to perform, then I made the leap to professional theatre. I worked as an actor a lot but also started writing. And then, at the same time, I was very interested in policy, so I was on a lot of committees, and ultimately, all those three things came together. I've been doing it for almost four years now. As of last year, I have 64 theatre companies in my portfolio. I talk to the companies, I go to their performances, I monitor their finances and I recruit assessment committees.

Apart from the structural four-year funding rounds, we also have four production rounds each year where companies can apply for a subsidy for a specific project. As of three years ago, we have a General Committee, so we don't label applications as Theatre or Dance or Music – we just look at the application and then we find the experts, the people who have expertise in what is being proposed. So there's no distinction being made between the different forms of art. And this is because it's what's happening in the field, you see a lot of productions that include film, dance, spoken word, so it would be ludicrous to adhere to those strict distinctions.

We have a number of other funding schemes. When I was appointed, I instigated a scheme that's called #newplays. And it's specifically catering to young writers who are beyond the networks of the fund. We work together with partners in urban areas but also in the north. We have five partners and they each supply us with aspiring writers, and they get a professional trajectory for nine months, we pay them, they get masterclasses, and then hopefully we will have new voices and new stories that will come out of that. This year is the third edition of this scheme. One writer from the first edition, a Turkish writer, has now premiered his play in one of the mainstream theatres. So that's wonderful to see.

Apart from that, we also do funding for writers to develop themselves, they can apply and get funding for two years just to write on their own, just trying to hone their skills. During the pandemic, we created a lot of new schemes to keep the field alive, so the fund is a very good thing for the field. The government gives money to the arts in two ways. One is through the funds that I described, like mine, and the other way is directly – the direct funding goes to the

national, larger institutions, like the National Ballet Museum. But these institutions are also more conservative. So we pride ourselves on the fact that the true artists are with us.

ML
Talking specifically about writers, you said that they can directly apply to you.

JM
Yes, once a year, you can apply by declaring the skills you want to develop. So for instance, if you want to get better at how to write dialogue, you can apply for that. And we judge it through several criteria: expertise, authenticity, but also, who are you doing it for? How are you going to get produced? Because we don't want to fund plays that are going to end up in a in a drawer. So you have to know which producer you want to approach, which dramaturgs are going to read it, what is your process, and so on. This is like a five-page application, so it's not difficult. And we give up to €16,000, depending on how long the play is that you want to develop. Another way of getting money for writers is if there's a production company, or a theatre company that wants to commission a play, they can apply for a production subsidy, and then there's up to €7,000 to write a play. And then #newplays, which is just for young writers.

ML
How would you describe the playwriting scene in the Netherlands?

JM
There's only one school in the Netherlands, the University of Utrecht, that offers a BA programme in writing for performance, and then you can specialise in either playwriting or scriptwriting for television. And then in the Film Academy, you can study screenwriting. There are a number of famous Dutch playwrights who are very good and who get to work a lot with the bigger companies. And when companies commission a play to be written, which doesn't happen a lot, they can afford to pay the writer a lot more. Our National Theatre in The Hague was very white, very conservative and posh, but it has been going through change in the last four or five years, because there's a new artistic director, Eric de Vroedt. He's half Indonesian, and he wanted to bring the world into that old National Theatre. He has been commissioning a lot of new plays, brought in a lot of new and diverse actors. And this change is happening now, but it's ongoing. And then there's a difference between the big theatres, the proscenium arch venues, and the black box venues, where many plays are written 'on the floor', as we say, meaning during rehearsals, and then the writer writes up the improvisations. And there are a number of people who are very successful at that, and they are in demand, so you will hear the same names over and over. I wouldn't say there's a thriving playwriting culture here in the Netherlands. In fact, last year, when we had the structural subsidy, when we first looked where the cut-off line was for funding, all the text-based theatre companies were below it, so it looked like they would not be getting funding, and that would have been a really bad thing. Then, luckily, we got extra funding from the minister, so that didn't happen. But that tells you how traditional playwriting is struggling. Also, a lot of the classics are being redone and adapted: Shakespeare, Chekhov and all the big writers. So black box playwriting venues don't get funded that often, because they are not considered as highbrow is as proscenium arch theatres.

ML

It’s great to hear about diversity and I’ll ask you more about that later. Are you suggesting that new Dutch playwriting is perceived as less prestigious than, say, director-led work?

JM
What I’m saying is that theatre critics who write reviews about new plays in the papers are old school. And they will look for well-made plays or consider the plays through traditional. There are a lot of good plays being written in black box theatres, but they tell the story with different tools. So it's not just about words, it could be spoken word, or words could be on screen, or it could be a DJ who's telling a story, and that’s still not being regarded as real playwriting. I'm generalising, but that’s the trend I can see. If you want to get money from us, we judge it on skills, but also on who your audience is, how important it is for society now to see this play. Those questions are never asked, in my opinion, of a new Shakespeare production. How important is it that we can have a new Shakespeare production, again, given what's going on in the world today? I love classical writers. But there are different parameters that should be brought in to look at what’s being produced.

ML
Do the critics have a lot of influence in the Netherlands?

JM
If you look at the diversity that’s happening with the new plays by the younger generation – the audience that goes to those kinds of plays don’t read the papers, so they’re not influenced by them. But the people who are on the fund’s committees, they all read the papers. And you notice that when we're discussing the applications, they also discuss reviews of all the work. And they may or may not agree with what is being said. But that’s the framework through which they look at things. I've been in the arts for more than 25 years. And every time we talk about diversity, the people who are against it will always bring up the same old argument: ‘We have to do diversity, but quality has to be the most important factor’, like the two are mutually exclusive. Of course it's about quality. That's where we start from. So why do we have to have this conversation when diversity is in the mix? I'm not doing that anymore. I refuse to have that conversation.

ML
These conversations are quite toxic.

JM
Yes, they are. It's about value systems, I suppose. If we want to talk about diversity, I’m the only black woman in Dutch theatre who works on the policy side and who is high up in the system. I’m in a position of power, but there's nobody else like me up here. I only deal with white people, mostly people of goodwill, but it's not right.

ML
So how does the Dutch Theatre Fund support EDI? And what are the priorities for the organisation in terms of cultivating diversity?

JM

We have a lot of conversations about it. We have ‘Deep Democracy’ sessions, we talk about it two, three times a year as a whole company for a whole day. We talk about why it's important. So it’s an active, ongoing conversation. It’s difficult because we’re the only fund that’s doing that at the moment. The other ones talk about it but but don’t do much about it. We are trying to make real change but it’s slow. For instance, we have an urban project, but very little diversity in the applications. So what we did, together with two other funds, is we appointed ambassadors who were young, culturally diverse, hip, and who went out and alerted their peers that the fund existed. And that worked really well. Now, their network knows about the fund and hopefully will continue to use it.

ML
Do the organisations that you fund have to demonstrate positive action with EDI?

JM
There's three codes that they have to adhere to: the fair practice code, the cultural governance, and inclusion and diversity. But the problem is that when they apply for something, they have to tick those boxes, and, you know, write two or three lines. And that's it. Because we can never do anything about it, so it’s very frustrating. I think – but I'm alone in this – that, if after two funding rounds, nothing has happened, I think an organisation should feel it in their budget. And then I'm sure something would change.

ML
What is your assessment of the diversity among writers and actors?

JM
If we talk about actors, there's a number of actors now coming through the schools, it’s been like this for the last decade. At the National Theatre, there’s one of the main actors who is black, Romana Vrede. She won the Louis d’Or, which is the biggest prize in the Netherlands, for a role in David Mamet’s play, *Race*. As for the writers, there's one, Esther Duysker, she’s a screenwriter and also does theatre. She's very hot right now. And that's about it. I also teach at the Writing for Performance School in Urtecht and there's one writer who will graduate next year. The awareness is there, also because it's mandatory now to have a vision about inclusion and diversity. What I notice when I'm teaching there is that the white students write about love and families while the whole world is on fire – they’re not addressing it, so I shake them up, and other stuff comes out. Whereas the Black writers write about stuff that matters because they don't have the luxury of navel gazing.

ML
What are the other obstacles for Black and Global Majority writers in Holland?

JM
Another obstacle is that, as a Black writer, if you don't write about so-called ‘Black issues’, you're not taken seriously. And you're accused of being superficial. There's a whole trajectory that I also went through when I was younger: I thought, ‘I’m a writer, I’m not a “Black writer”’. That will take time, and it’s not something that is addressed in the schools, because the schools adhere to a white perspective, white dramaturgy. All the classics are white, and the there's no

awareness of another way of telling stories. Because diversity and inclusion is seen as something that you have to do on top of everything else. It's not. For instance, I can't tell you how many times I've spoken to companies, and they say, 'We're going to do a play about diversity, so we've hired a marketing person for six months, who's an expert in diversity. They have their own network'. I'm like, 'Yeah, and then they leave again. And then what?', and they say, 'Yeah, but then we don't need them anymore'. So the apartheid is an issue. The knowledge and willingness of people, the audience, but also the critics, to put aside their perceptions of diversity and inclusion and just be open to what is given to them is an issue. I think it should be taught in schools that there's a lot more than the western canon. And then, for me, I was always the only one. And so I had the burden of the whole Black identity on me, and it gets tiresome. You just want to be yourself and write about stuff that interests you. And not be the person that represents other people.

ML
Thank you for sharing this with me, I hear you. The system is discriminatory. What about audience diversity?

JM
In Amsterdam there are a lot of theatres and but there's one, the Bijlmer Parktheater, which is in Bijlmer, a Black-majority neighbourhood. It's always packed, whether it's classical or contemporary theatre, comedy, dance, and so on, and the audience is diverse, eager, ready and able to accept what they see, without prejudging it. So there is an audience, absolutely. If you go to Rotterdam, you have Zuidplein Theater – it's packed. It's like one of the most diverse areas. It's full of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Ghanaian, Indonesian people, you name it, they all come together to have an experience. They don't go to the Schouwburg Rotterdam in the centre, because there's a perception that it's not for them, because that's been communicated for years. It's also not for lower class white people, so it's also a class thing. It's not just ethnicity. You know, if you go to the theatre you easily pay €32 for a ticket. But if you go to the Bijlmer Parktheater, the ticket is €7.50. And in the big venues, we have a system where you can get a membership and you can buy season tickets for the whole year. The people who can afford that are old, grey, and upper class. They will go to whatever is on because they paid for it. They are important for the theatres because they bring in the money. And so the theatres cater to them more. So, it's not that they actively want to exclude people, but they look at who's bringing in the money.

ML
What about representation in majority-white spaces, do you feel that there is a there is an awareness of the dangers and the risks of appropriation?

JM
Before I came to work for the state fund, I worked for the Amsterdam fund, the local arts fund. And we had a briefing of all the committees before assessing the applications for structural subsidy. And the chairman of the classical music committee stood up in that meeting and said, 'Can we just not take diversity into account when it comes to music? Because it doesn't matter to us. We're not affected by it'. And he was serious. That is still prevalent in the music scene, but also in certain theatre scenes. And I don't know, I don't have a solution to it.

ML
How is casting for classical texts being addressed in those theatres? How's *Othello* being staged, for instance?

JM
Casting is still traditional. In the last 10 years, Toneelgroep Amsterdam did a production of *Othello* in which the main character was in blackface. And it caused an uproar, so they won't do that again. But a smaller company did a production of *Othello* with one of the leading Black actors who's very good, and they changed the ending. Just to make a point, and that caused a lot of uproar too. It was directed by a white Bosnian director who is a voice of the future. She had the balls to say, 'No, we're not going to do that, Desdemona is not going to die, Othello is not going to kill her. And we're going to tell you why'. So they stopped the play at some point, and just addressed the audience. And it was really fantastic. But of course, old-school people were appalled. And that's a good debate to have. The National Theatre sometimes do colour-blind casting, but they only have a few actors of colour. Romana was in *Mary Stuart* as the Queen Mother, and people constantly asked questions, 'We didn't know there were Black people in that historical time – don't you think it will take away from the story?' and all that silly stuff. So, yes, there are little successes, and then there are still big steps to be made. It's definitely different from 10 years ago, when it was completely white. But the people offstage, the directors, they're still all white. And that's not going to change anytime soon.

ML
How can things change more quickly?

JM
What's happening now, which is interesting, is that the new artistic director of the Bijlmer Theatre is a Black woman, Jolanda Spoel. There's also a theatre in Rotterdam's harbour, called Theater Rotterdam, which was a white bastion and it's on the brink of going down, and they also appointed a Black woman as artistic director, Alida Dors. So that's huge, two Black women as artistic directors in Holland, that's never happened before. Like I said, more and more diverse actors are graduating from the schools. The awareness among the younger generation is great – it's not even awareness, that's how they grew up. So for them, inclusion and diversity are no issue, especially in the big cities, that's how they roll. If you go outside of Rotterdam and Amsterdam, it's a little more difficult. But a new generation is coming up, so I'm hopeful. But it's really important that there are more people like me in positions of power. That's why the committees I put together are always diverse, because they can recognise the stories that other people can't. And it's not a Black or white thing for me, it's an awareness thing. It's a mindset, you know. It's nice if you're on stage, but it's even more important if you're on a committee, or if you're behind the camera. Or if you are in a position where you can shape policy. That's how real change is made. And it's not sexy. It's a lot of hard work.

ML
That sounds really great. Thank you so much for sharing your insight, frustrations and hopes with me.

Biography

Jenny Mijnhijmer was born in Surinam but moved to Europe when she was one year old. She grew up in the Dutch culture but always treasured her Surinamese roots. She started writing short stories and plays at the age of five. She went to college and studied English Literature and Theatrical Science. She is a playwright and screenwriter and has worked extensively in the theatre and in television. Her work has been critically acclaimed and she has won international prizes with her short film *You 2*. Jenny is currently Secretary of Theatre at the Fonds Podiumkunsten (Performing Arts Fund), where she is head of the Theatre Department.

We Have to Run Faster: A Conversation with Tiago Rodrigues and Marco Mendonça about Playwriting in Portugal

In this conversation, stage artists Tiago Rodrigues and Marco Mendonça describe the contemporary playwriting scene in Portugal, situating it within their historical context. As Artistic Director of Lisbon's National Theatre, Rodrigues introduced practices observed elsewhere in Europe, aimed at supporting a local new writing scene. As a young actor, translator and playwright of Mozambican heritage, Mendonça evaluates the current state inclusivity and diversity in Portuguese theatre, proposing a reassessment of the dominant white canon, along with its function and values. This conversation took place on 11 January 2022.

Margherita Laera
Could you tell us about your involvement with contemporary playwriting in Portugal?

Marco Mendonça
My name is Marco, I was born in Mozambique. I am 26 years old, I studied theatre in the Lisbon Film and Theatre School from 2012 to 2015. I was lucky enough to be picked up by Tiago for an internship at the National at the Lisbon National Theatre, Dona Maria II. I was there for a year and I got the chance to work not only with Tiago himself but also with a lot of other stage directors and dramaturgs. And then I started developing a desire to start writing my own plays and even translating some texts I wanted to see on stage. I have translated texts by British authors, such as Gary McNair, Kieran Hurley and Chris Thorpe. I really enjoy translating for the stage, exploring words and trying to make them your own in a different language while respecting the overall frame of the play itself. I've been exploring and translating a play by James Baldwin called *Blues for Mr. Charlie*. Eventually I would like to stage it, it's a very special play to me. I've also been exploring playwriting, but in a very discreet way.

Tiago Rodrigues
My name is Tiago I'm 44, I started working as an actor in 1998. I worked with several companies in Portugal and in other countries, especially with tg STAN, a Belgian company, which was a huge influence for me when it comes to theatre aesthetics. I also work with text and with translation from the point of view of the actor and the ensemble. I later created a company with Magda Bizarro in 2003, called Mundo Perfeito, and we worked in a very collaborative manner. From 2007, I started to direct pieces and then write for my own performances. Later on, in 2016, I was invited to direct the National Theatre in Lisbon, which is also very connected to playwriting and translation, as it does mainly text-based theatre. So in that sense, it broadened my relationship with classical repertoire, translations and contemporary writing. I did that for seven years and, recently, I was appointed Artistic Director of the Avignon Festival. In my work I write most of my pieces, but I also work with the repertoire and adaptation. As an author I work a lot with translation because, most of the time, I start from adaptations of previous works, be it theatre writing or literature, where I take from the source and sometimes I do my own translation in order to adapt it for the stage. In that sense, translation is an operation that is very close to my practice as an artist.

ML

How would you describe the contemporary playwriting scene in Portugal?

TR

I think the historical perspective is very important. We're talking about a country that had 48 years of dictatorship in the 20th century, the longest fascist dictatorship in Europe, marked heavily by theatre censorship. The dictatorship also created a hunger for the possibility of performing a certain repertoire, which was banned for so many decades. A number of independent companies and artists who began in the late 60s and early 70s and who are, still today, the most highly regarded in the country, started in the in the twilight of the dictatorship, and were extremely important as a reference point in the beginning of democracy, after 1974. These companies were very attached to a repertoire that they couldn't perform before, or to aesthetics that they were developing, which were not necessarily based on the connection with a writer. They were influenced by Grotowski, Peter Brook, Peter Stein, Giorgio Strehler, and so many others. With some very interesting exceptions, we didn't have a strong new writing movement emerging from the dictatorship. Of course, you have authors such as Bernardo Santareno and Luís de Sttau Monteiro, who wrote amazing work during the dictatorship and immediately after, but they were the exception. So new writing in Portugal was always something that depended on the initiatives of companies.

In the 90s, there was a big rise in authors directing their own plays. I would say that an instrumental person was George Silva Melo, who created Artistas Unidos, a company that started in the late 90s. George writes plays and gives playwriting workshops. He inspired, me included, a lot of young actors and directors to write their own plays, or adapt in their own way, so that as writers we could be the catalyzers of a theatre project in the context a collaborative rehearsal process. Today, many companies have in-house dramaturgs who write for a specific aesthetic. The idea of authors who write plays who might be directed and staged by someone else is not a very Portuguese phenomenon. I think of authors like Joana Craveiro, who is one of the great names of Portuguese writing: her writing comes from within her artistic research, together with her company, as a director and an artist. I would say that, with few exceptions, in Portugal, new writing is mostly connected to, and emerges from, the process of stage work.

MM

I agree with Tiago. I started going to the theatre ten years ago, and I think most of the plays I watched were in translation, written by mostly European authors. Lots of companies do that and translate here. Sometimes they commission their own translations. But as for new playwriting, I think young companies have a strong need to respond to the times we are living in, so that's where the drive comes from. I would also say new playwriting is growing in terms of diversity, I think we can already feel a new wave of playwrights, whether they belong to companies or not. They're slowly rising from anonymity and presenting new narratives to Portuguese audiences. We have artists from the LGBT community, not being so afraid or reluctant to bring their stories to the stage. We now have Black artists writing their stories and telling them on big stages, reaching a higher number of people. It’s also thanks to artistic directors such as Tiago, that some of these stories could meet their audiences in places such as such as the National Theatre. But there's still a lot of work to be done in terms of project financing, commissioning, and most of all, acknowledging that these stories exist, and deserve their space in Portuguese culture.

ML

Who are the big players in the playwriting ecosystem, except for companies, which you have both mentioned?

TR
There is a ridiculous lack of financial support from the state and in general from political decision-makers when it comes to theatre. In Portugal, when it comes to money, the big players are the public theatres and the cultural centres, that is, the municipal and central governments, which finance these public institutions. But artistically, the big players are the independent artists, the independent companies, those who don't have money. We don't have a tradition of producing houses like other countries, with very honourable exceptions – one of them being the National Theatre in Lisbon. We also don't have a strong tradition of associated artists, venues don't have in-house dramaturgs, and don't commission texts, for instance. This means that all artistic endeavours are shaped by the initiative of those who don't have the money, but have the know-how, the desire to research, the experience, the drive, or the naiveté to jump into an artistic venture, while the money is managed by institutions who don't have a vision.

In the National Theatre, we tried to resist as one of the few institutions that had in-house artists, namely a small ensemble of actors. We also organised new writing labs and commissioned new texts. Without even knowing whether we would produce a certain text, we initiated this sort of connection with authors by commissioning them. There was no tradition of this in Portugal. We imported this from our observation, for instance, of what the Royal Court would do in London or other institutions in other countries. One of the things that we realised, while working while discussing with writers and artists, was that we should commission and programme writers too, and not only companies or directors.

ML
You both mentioned writing labs. How does one train to become a playwright in Portugal?

MM
I didn't have any specific training apart from actor training. I know there are some postgraduate programmes in creative writing, but it looks like the people who take these courses have a hard time jumping on to the market. There are also many self-taught playwrights. And I think my training, if we can call it that, comes from what I feel as a necessity to make work. I've been working with two fellow actors from college, we've created two performances together. We don't have a specific method for writing what we write – we write together, the three of us, and the three of us direct. We basically just spend a lot of time researching, reading, making, writing down ideas. And then we start translating those ideas into the form of texts or dialogues. And that's how we train each other to understand what we like or dislike in playwriting. Mostly, I try to learn from reading plays. And from being part of a creative process.

TR
Yes, I think self-taught authors are the norm in Portugal, firstly because there's not a lot of formal education, and secondly because formal programmes are more inclined towards theory, not practice. I believe that the best learning experiences are self-organised writers' collectives, where authors come together debating in an organised way about their writing methods, their approach, their references, sharing their readings and knowledge. In my case, I'm very much a self-taught artist, not only as writer, but also that at many other levels, because I only did one

year of drama school, then I left to start work. And since then, I always looked at my artistic work as a continuation of that learning process. I also have a hard time in calling myself a playwright or accepting that label. It's not so much that I don't recognise myself as a writer, but because each piece is part of this learning process – I'm learning how to write about this or that subject, how to perform this or that topic, how to experiment with tools I haven't used before. On the one hand you can call yourself self-taught, while on the other, our work is really based on the teaching of many other people, even if it's informal and it doesn't look like school at all. There would be no harm in having more formal education in playwriting in Portugal, because that would probably add to the diversity of paths to become a playwright. When I look around me in Portugal, most people who write for the theatre come from theatre-making and use writing is an extension of their theatre work. So their training is already is complete, and they just add writing to their practice.

ML
This used to be the case in Italy as well, and now things are changing. I wonder whether we shouldn't question the idea that the British system, with its formal education, its commissioning venues and its many playwrights who don't also work as theatre-makers, is the model every country should aspire to.

TR
Not at all. I just think the British model is so distant from the Portuguese scene that having some elements borrowed from it is important to add to the possibilities here. One person that I thought was very interesting in our in our experience with new writers at the Lisbon National Theatre was Davide Carnevali, an Italian author whose play *Sweet Home Europa* we premiered. Davide brought at once a perspective that is close to the academic world and, simultaneously, he was very close to artistic practice, but he is adamant that he perceives himself as a theatre writer above all. And that's a job description that we often don't have in Portugal. For us, Davide was an international example of a rather young upcoming European author.

ML
Yes, I know Davide's work, and he is also very distant from the Italian model of the actor-author. He lives and works between Barcelona and Berlin.

TR
And that's Europe, right? When I talk about the British example, or the Royal Court example, I might think of poet, performer and writer Sabrina Mahfouz, for instance, who is not necessarily your typical British author, and when I think about an Italian example, you see the half German half Catalan resonances. When it comes to new playwriting in Europe, I find it interesting that texts, through translation, but also through the influence of writers' references, is no longer strictly linked to geographical boundaries, in the sense that an Italian author relates to its language (Italian), but not necessarily to Italy's geographic territory. With theatre in Portugal, you can't really put your fingers on a specific taste. It's so influenced throughout the decades by so many theatres in so many countries. In my case, I would say that Spanish, Belgian and specifically Flemish theatre were a huge influence. And I think that is starting to happen a lot with the writing, that we're going more and more beyond our borders. I think that has to do, of

course, with translation as a way to deliver texts, but also with translation as a way of being influenced by texts, when you read plays in order to write.

ML
I wanted to ask about the kinds of conversations and debates that are being held about the state of representation and inclusion of difference in Portuguese theatre.

MM
I think some very important conversations are definitely getting started. Specifically in Lisbon – I wouldn't say it's a national discussion, yet. Some institutions seem to be opening up for dialogue and are starting to show some mild attention to the subject. But the truth is the structures remain pretty much untouched. And even though the artistic landscape is slowly becoming more diverse, it's only on stage, and rarely in the positions of power and decision making. That will take time, if it ever happens.

I also think there should be an important discussion about the canon. Many of these so-called classics, from Shakespeare to Tennessee Williams, Euripides or Chekhov, are tied up to a certain historical notion of value, that doesn't always resonate with the world as it is right now. We can always look at these old plays and find new ways of reading them, and finding new meanings that fit our own time, but I also find myself thinking about what defines a classic, which authors can be considered 'classic authors', and why. And as I try to answer these questions, maybe a possible answer could be that these texts address matters of universal concern. They have influenced people's perspectives about the world, about life and love, making a huge mark on generations of artists to come. But these are also objects that enjoy perpetual respect, and they keep being looked at as if they were these theatre Bibles, so that people keep asking them questions, and putting them in perspective so as to find answers through them, for how we should perceive the world today. But this is only focused on a very specific slice of society, namely Western, white-centred society. We could ask why August Wilson, or James Baldwin, for example, aren't considered classic playwrights in Portugal or in Europe. You know, of course, Baldwin only wrote two plays. But I know that they would have influenced many generations of artists if they had been staged and acknowledged as much as Arthur Miller's play, for instance.

As a young playwright, I feel a huge necessity to develop my work according to my context. Even though I've been lucky enough to work with a number of directors, such as Tiago, the great majority of actors of colour working in Portugal doesn't have the same opportunities. Whether it's in theatre, film, or TV, only a couple of us actually get to make a living doing this. So it stopped being a dream for many of us and became an eventuality, something that can happen once a year, if we're lucky, once every two, five years. And this obviously affects my mind, my motivation, and my way of looking at the artistic landscape of the country. I live in this country, which is my home for the past 14 years, so this must necessarily affect how I write and the kinds of stories I wish to tell. Of course, these stories must be or can be about invisibility, discrimination, but they must also be about pride and perseverance. I would like to create a space where I can make opportunities for people who look like me and with whom I can tell stories from the same perspective, because we were always here, and James Baldwin was always here, our stories always existed, it's only fair and logical that we get to tell them. Some companies, like Aurora Negra, paved the way for new playwrights and artists of colour who are discriminated against in Portuguese society, and if they are given spaces in big institutions, to tell

their stories and to contribute to the advancement of the conversation about equality, inclusion, that's good. I think it's very early stage, these debates are now starting to become part of the conversations in theatre, but still feel like we need to rethink the classics and bring in new authors too, or old authors who are new to the Portuguese theatre reality, to start inspiring people in different ways.

TR

I agree with Marco. I think the conversation is starting way too slowly. We're talking about a country that has a complex relation to its colonial history, where the dominant discourse is still painting the Portuguese coloniser as kinder compared to other colonisers, and they talk about the expansion of the Portuguese Empire as 'The Discoveries', that's still the official name for it in school, as if the Portuguese of those times had actually discovered something, instead of conquering and oppressing and exploiting people, countries and cultures. So, in this context, a very niche debate on these issues has started to question how we can frame our history, namely, with inclusion of diversity in Portuguese theatre. We also see the beginning of a conversation in other forms of diversity, such as the access of disabled artists, or spectators, and inclusion of gender diversity and social diversity. In the past few years, a lot of institutions tried to start a debate and some action on this. For my experience, the artists are driving this. Almost nothing has been done when it comes to gatekeepers and structures. Nothing compared to the work that has already been done for gender equality, where we are at a much more advanced stage.

I'm a big advocate of 'we have no time' and 'it can't be gradual'. I'm an advocate for acting upon our current knowledge. What we know now should make us act in a very decisive way, perhaps making mistakes, listening to feedback, including everyone in the debate and decision-making. We have a historical delay here, because when a lot of people after the Second World War in Europe started having these debates, we had the dictatorship gripping us and keeping us at the starting point. And so now we have to run faster. That's a sort of diagnosis of where we are today. I find the issue that Marco was raising about the classics very interesting. It's an interesting debate to act upon. By doing theatre, I think we have an urge to give space to the people who were not able to get to this space. But there's also what we owe ourselves, all of us, even the white male, heterosexual, 44-year-olds Tiago Rodrigues of this world, who were and still are now in a place of power. I owe myself the richness of these stories that could not be told for the last decades.

So instead of defending *The Cherry Orchard* As the white canon, I'm very interested in seeing all the *Cherry Orchards* that are yet to be written in another manner, with another world view. I'm also very interested in accessing Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* as seen, understood, translated, or questioned by artists who don't look or live like me, even if they're my neighbours. I want to know how they perceive *The Cherry Orchard*, how they refuse it, whatever they do with it. I think it's very important that we also what debbie tucker green talks about, when she says, 'I tell my stories from my community, for my community, the way I see the world, I bring a new vision that was not there before, but it exists, it was only rather invisible to you, and I make it visible on a broader space, while addressing my community, I reach out to everyone'. I'm also very interested in reinventing the canon, or the recuperation of invisible canons.

What's important is that institutions in the whole ecology of Portuguese theatre have to urgently create space for people who are normally underrepresented in places of power. I think we have to put our foot on the gas and go really fast, and never ever slow down.

ML
Thank you both.

Tiago Rodrigues 100-word bio

Marco Mendonça 100-word bio

A New Beginning? A Conversation with Mark Levitas on Playwriting in Turkey

This conversation with Mark Levitas, Istanbul-based artistic director of Platform Theatre company, covers his perceptions about the state of Turkish theatre. He discusses the Turkish playwriting scene, its genealogies, funding structures, discourses, and hopes for the future. He describes the difficulties playwrights and theatre-makers encounter in Turkey when trying to make theatre that is political and engaged with social issues, especially since the conservative turn of 2001, and shares his hopes for a more open-minded, inclusive society. This interview took place on 14 July 2021.

Margherita Laera
You are a theatre director with a particular interest in contemporary playwriting. Can you tell me more about your work?

Mark Levitas
My company is called Platform Tiyatro and we work on contemporary plays, we are on Instagram and you can see what we do there. I'm a director and an academic, and I also sometimes work as an actor. I collaborate with playwright Ceren Ercan in this company. She's also a playwright for Fabulamundi. Platform Tiyatro are a Partner of Fabulamundi, twinned with Sala Beckett. We would have liked to have been a full partner in the project, but we were not able to meet the conditions, as we are a small company. But we met so many playwrights through Fabulamundi, and that was very good.

MLa
What attracts you to the European playwriting scene?

MLev
I feel very connected to European theatre. I studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and I love French theatre. There was a big a project about playwriting here in Turkey, called New Text New Theatre. It started in 2005 and it was created by an independent theatre company GalataPerform, and it's still going on. I was one of the collaborators of this big project. They have two strands: firstly, they invite playwrights from Europe, like French, Spanish, Romanian playwrights, and then they do stage readings in Turkish translation. And secondly, they run courses for Turkish playwrights, because most of them don't have any education in theatre, they do different jobs and want to get into writing plays and they take part in workshops. Some of them also come from acting or directing. I worked for almost seven years for this project. And for me, it was interesting because I speak French, English and Spanish, and I discovered many playwrights in this way. In 2009, we invited Rodrigo Garcia here. It started with him. This project was very good for our theatre scene because we made great connections with playwrights all over Europe: Sergi Belbel, Juan Mayorga, Gianina Carbonariu, Carles Battle, we invited big names and some of their plays also ended up in national theatres here. Ceren was also working for this project, and we met there. Then I stopped working for this project to start my own company.

In 2016 I founded Platform Theatre with Ceren, and we also work independently. We wanted to have some connections with European theatre and we made our first production with Sao Luiz Municipal Theatre of Lisbon. We also collaborate some German theatre company for next years. We were collaborating with a German company on a digital project called Map to

Utopia, to develop a gaming project with theatrical elements, it's a kind of hybrid project but during the pandemic we transformed it into an online project – we made it with Turkish actors in Turkish, in German with German actors, and then we made it in English too. You can find out more on the website https://maptoutopia.com/. We are still developing different versions for this project.

MLa
How would you describe the playwriting scene in Turkey?

MLev
I would like to start with some historical context. The first original Turkish play, *The Wedding of a Poet* by Ibrahim Şinasi was written in 1860, during the Ottoman period, but at the time there were more traditional forms of theatre, it was more similar to Commedia dell'Arte and we also had puppet theatre, Karagiozis, so this kind of work was not similar to the European style, it was not playwriting. Playwriting started to be more frequent in the Tanzimat period, and thereafter when the Republic started in 1923. With the development of original Turkish literature, there were also new plays. The system of playwriting was really connected with the big institutions, with national theatres and municipal theatres. National theatres and municipal theatres gave a big percentage of the box office intake to the playwright, so the playwrights could afford to live very well off their writing, and that is still the case today with national and municipal theatres. But when playwrights do something in the independent or private theatres, the situation is really difficult. In municipal theatre, you get something like 35% of the value of ticket sales each night – it's so different from Europe – and in the National Theatre up until two or three years ago, it was 40% of box office, and now it's 20%, so it's a huge sum of money for a playwright. Why am I telling you this? Because all the playwrights were trying to get into the national municipal theatre system to survive and to live off theatre. And because of that, many playwrights were discovered through public theatres. Between the 1960s and 1980s, some Turkish playwrights were inspired by Brecht's epic theatre. And this was the beginning of the development of a political theatre in Turkey. And then there was a big break because of the military intervention.

In the late 1990s, and also the beginning of 2000s, a new generation of playwrights started to emerge, mostly in Istanbul, where they work not only as playwrights, but also as directors, and they direct their own plays. They are now in their 40s, like Yeşim Özsoy, Berkun Oya, Yiğit Sertdemir. In the Fabulamundi selection, most of them direct their plays in independent theatres. This generation does not like working in municipal or national theatres, because, you know, that's an old-fashioned system, and too connected with politics, because the government gives money. In the past twenty years, after 2002, we had big problems and many people prefer to create their own companies and many playwrights grow up in small theatres, with small companies. They write a play, for example, and after one month their produce it, immediately, with small budgets, really small budgets, a kind of 'off theatre', but now this generation is now mostly made up of established playwrights and they also work in big theatres, not the national or municipal ones, but big private theatre venues, because they developed their work and now even big stars want to work with them. Some of them for example are now working for Netflix – it's strange, because they were doing theatre in bars, with twenty people in the audience, but they prefer to be independent, they don't want to be a part of the municipal or national theatre because there is a lot of pressure there. But the municipality changed administration last year. The government party lost in Istanbul and Ankara. Now we have the

Social Democrats, they run the municipal theatre. The owner of the Arcola Theatre directs the municipal Theatre of Istanbul, Mehmet Ergen. And the municipal theatre is a big institution, because they have seven or eight venues, not only one, in both sides of the city, the European side and the Asian side, they have maybe 200-300 actors, it's a big institution. [At the time of publication, Ergen has stepped down, and Ayşegül İşsever is the new artistic director of Istanbul's municipal theatre]

MLa
Are the actors are salaried?

MLev
Yes, they are employed for life, like in the Comédie Française.

MLa
And in the independent system?

MLev
No, in the independent system, there is no money. Actually, the government gives small grants for specific projects, but you know, after recent events, they don't give any money to political theatre companies. The situation of independent theatres was horrible during the pandemic. Only the municipalities run by Social Democrats, those municipalities support some independent theatre companies.

MLa
Are there any professional courses to become a playwright in Turkey?

MLev
Yes. We have some Dramaturgy Departments. One is in Izmir, a big institution, one in Ankara, and one in Istanbul, part of Istanbul University. It's a Department of Dramaturgy and Theatre Criticism, It's very separate from the Acting Department, which exist in all these institutions. You study four years to become a playwright or dramaturg, but you have more theory lessons than practice. There were some playwrights who studied in this university. And there were some actors, like Berkay Ateş, a very well-known film and theatre performer, but he also works as a playwright.

MLa
Are there any playwrights that operate both in the independent scene and in the state-run municipal and national theatres? Is it possible?

MLev
Yes, we have one playwright like this, Özen Yula, he's in his mid-50s. He works in Europe too. His plays are translated into many languages, he's very established. He has written more than 30 plays and they are translated into French, by the Maison Antoine Vitez, they were also translated into English in America, into Polish, German, Italian, and so on. His plays are performed in national and municipal theatres, he works for cinema and television too. His play was in Vienna last month. But it's not very common, it's unique. He is a kind of Mark Ravenhill, or Bernard

Marie Koltès, you know, everyone knows him. His generation are mostly working in national or municipal theatres, they are not doing independent theatre. And, when they get more money, they prefer writing novels, or writing for television, and they quit theatre, because to have the continuity, it's difficult in Turkey. Younger generations prefer independent theatre. Also, municipal and national theatres don't want to work with young playwrights, because they are afraid that they might write on political issues, or feminist issues. But in the independent scene you can have your own voice.

MLa
Is there any form of state censorship or control on the content of plays?

MLev
Yes, there is in the national and municipal theatre system. And also, there's a strange system where even the audience can make a complaint and say, 'this play is against our morality'. And because of that, it's very difficult for political theatre, but independent theatres are a lot more free, some of them had some plays censored, but there is also a lot of self-censorship, we discuss this matter a lot between us, and you know, no one admits they are self-censoring, but of course, but it's in your head. Yes, you are afraid. Everyone is trying to survive. The system here is confused, unfortunately. With Mehmet Ergen running the municipal theatre, I think it will be much better. But I'm thinking that he is a little bit of a dreamer because he spends most of his time in London and sometimes gets confused between London and Turkey. He has very good ideas, for instance he has a project for women directors, he has new spaces in Istanbul for more avantgarde work, he has many good projects, he is an open-minded person. This means big power in Istanbul, and he also has money for productions coming from the municipality.

MLa
What are the themes that people are interested and concerned about? What are the independent playwrights writing about?

MLev
I think in the 2010s we had a lot of plays on the Kurdish problem. It was a little bit like a trend. Because you know, there was a lot of oppression of Kurdish people. And also LGBT issues are the subject of many plays, because again there is a lot of oppression here. The police don't give the permission to march, even in June, in the pride. This government, in the beginning, was more in the centre, but after 2010 they started to be the more radical. And after the Gezi protests, things changed. Because, for example, some companies were getting money for their projects each year from the government, but when they showed that they were against the government, their funding was cut, and they cut all relations with the government. And they started to become more political in their theatre. And for example, they use Shakespeare to comment on contemporary politics, or they stage Genet to say something about today.

In the last few years, unfortunately, for me it's unbelievable even to discuss this in our day and age, but women's issues are most important, again, because this government is so conservative. In Turkey, women come after men, unfortunately, and for me it's absurd to say this in 2021. There is a lot of violence against women in Turkey. But in the last five years, for example, theatre people are trying to support women directors, women playwrights. The directors of festivals are thinking about how they could make women more visible in the theatre.

But it's so shameful. Why are we at this point? Already in the late 90s I was saying, 'Don't treat men and women differently', but now people started to think, 'Let's choose a play by a woman because she's woman, because men are dominating the theatre field. It's shameful, everywhere, in Parliaments, in big institutions, all the local governments, men are on top, and because of that, some private theatres are now supporting women more. If, for example, there are two candidates, a man and a woman, they choose the woman, and that's good.

MLa
You mentioned that there's some action at the level of individuals or companies that make some positive steps to address marginalisation. There have been two movements that have really shaken European theatre and arts and culture in general, #metoo and Black Lives Matter. What impact have they had on Turkish theatre and arts?

MLev
Good question. Black Lives Matter hasn't had much of an impact here because we don't have so many foreigners, it's almost 100% Turkish heritage in our theatre scene. But with women's issues, I think so, as I told you. And we see what's going on also in Turkey, how women are treated, so it's affected the thearee.

MLa
But there must be ethnic minority members in your theatre community, you mentioned Kurdish ethnic minorities, so what about other ethnicities – are they visible?

MLev
There are a lot of Syrian people in Turkey but we don't have Syrian people in Turkish theatres, it's almost 100% Turkish heritage, but Kurdish people of course it's different. There was a Syrian woman, Amal Omran, who made a play. She performed it ten times, then disappeared. And there are a lot of Kurdish people who live Turkey, but they can study in the conservatories because they speak Turkish and they have Turkish passports, and this is a different issue. We are not like London or Paris – I mean, in Paris also there is a lot of foreigners but in French theatre there are very few minority ethnic people.

MLa
Of course, absolutely. So what's happening now, after the pandemic – are the theatres opening again?

MLev
Yes, slowly, the rehearsals will start now. Everything was closed. Now that it's summer, there are some parks and outdoor spaces where they are organising some venues for performances. This I think will be the beginning of something new. It's not just the pandemic. Istanbul is a very sunny is city, you can start with outdoor theatre in May and go on till October, the weather gives this opportunity. One theatre company, Dot, which is very well known, in this pandemic situation, created a performance space inside a forest. And the director, Murat Daltaban, who is well known, started to think how theatre could be more eco-friendly and connected to nature, so the pandemic made theatre people think how they could bring the theatre outside the big venues, far from the city's car traffic and pollution. Because there are some discussions among people

who are trying to find out how people can live together with nature, you know, form a community, like Théâtre du Soleil, you live together, you cook together, you make theatre together – this does not exist here, but now people have started to think about it a lot, because people are tired to live in Istanbul, you know, we have 18 million people. It's very difficult to live and it's expensive. So I think this is a new beginning for theatre, thinking with nature.

MLa
I think this is a really nice way to close, with hopes for the future. Thank you so much, Mark.

Mark Levitas was born in Istanbul. He studied acting at the École Jacques Lecoq in France and completed his MA in Theatre at the Paris III La Sorbonne Nouvelle. He took part as an actor in many theatre productions like Studio Oyuncuları, Dot and GalataPerform in Istanbul. In 2016, he founded the company Platform Tiyatro with Ceren Ercan, and they are based in Istanbul. He directed *The Rebellion Day of Dogs* coproduced by Sao Luis Municipal Theatre, Lisbon, and IKSV, İstanbul, and *Sea Daffodils* for Zorlu Psm, in İstanbul. In addition to co-producing the project *Berlin Zamani* with the Fringe Ensemble from Bonn, he took part in the digital project *Map to Utopia* as an actor and project designer. He gave lectures at Istanbul University State Conservatory for many years and still works as a lecturer at Istanbul Aydın University, Drama and Acting Department.