

Speech delivered by Vincent Baudriller on the occasion of the EFFE Award
Ceremony at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris
27th of September

In presence of:

Emmanuel Demarcy-Mota, Director of the Théâtre de la Ville and General Director of the
Festival d'Automne à Paris

Darko Brlek, President of the European Festivals Association

Karel Bartak, Head of the Unit for Creative Europe at the European Commission

Hanna Schygulla and the
Effe International Jury

“Thanks to Effe and the support of the European union, the jury has had the responsibility of selecting 12 art festivals in Europe among the 760 who received the Effe label.

This was the opportunity for us to think about the idea of European culture, the idea of festival, and how these two ideas can really be connected. “ Europe for Festival, Festival For Europe”

After the devastation of the 2nd World War, Europe became a symbol for hope, and thereafter came to represent the effort to rebuild the continent as a land of peaceful coexistence among countries with long and often antagonistic histories. From the moment the war ended, festivals like Cannes, Avignon or Edinburgh, expressed the urgent necessity of reconstructing a common and shared history, beyond the horrors and wounds of the war. Later on, the European economy and the common market became active and functioning realities, which is not without problem, as we recently saw with the Greek crisis.

But where are we today with this idea of Europe and culture? Current events in Europe and around the world, in particular this huge challenge of migration and refugees, remind us that this question is as important as ever and deserves our close attention.

This Europe exists through its diversity, and indeed may have no form other than criss-crossing differences. The tension between identity and openness is both a vulnerability and a strength, and calls for perpetual reengagement, re-examination and reformulation of the concept of Europe.

The goals of festivals have not changed, and their unique ability to draw a crowd that is curious to encounter “the other” is as relevant as ever. In this way, festivals provide an expression and a concrete experience of the Europe of culture that rejects all impulses toward isolationism.

For the jury, the endorsement of European festivals provides the opportunity to recognize cultural events of all sizes, each operating in its own country, at its own level and in its own chosen discipline in the defence of creativity. These festivals not only ensure the circulation of cultural projects, they also take the risk of creation, engage in productions and support artists. Furthermore, the selected festivals all have international aspects and ambitions in their programming and sometimes through the audiences they attract. Through the gatherings and flows of people mobilized and facilitated by festivals, they are a very concrete realization of the Europe of culture.

The festivals recognized by the EFFE Festival Award were not, however, selected on the basis of a competition. Rather, the award involved the selection of significant examples – which taken together create a striking image of the diversity that characterizes the Europe of culture in general and the relevance of the idea of festivals in particular.

Certainly, the winners all demonstrate outstanding standards of quality. Whether they are veterans or new on the scene, enjoy a high profile on the international stage or have a more local audience, together they represent the specific challenges and the ever more current, effective and efficient power of the festival concept, of this unique moment in which artworks, artists and audiences cross paths during a concentrated period and at a specific location. While some are deeply committed to their locales and others are itinerant or cross borders, through their inventiveness they all demonstrate the multiplicity of possible approaches to encouraging encounters and exchanges.

Finally, they show that the invigorating vitality of culture, the taste for curiosity and diversity, the welcoming of those who are “other” and different has a place in the North and South, and the East and West of Europe. They project the image of Europe, its diversity and its creativity, through gatherings featuring difference, exchange and encounter.”