

Heritage and Diversity Forum (HDF)

The “Heritage and Diversity Forum” (HDF) was newly founded during the 36th ITI World Congress in Fujairah (2023). The HDF emerged upon the split of the Network “Heritage, Indigenous and Migration” (N-HIM), which had proven to be too extensive and disparate in terms of topics.

It aims to bring together ITI members worldwide who are concerned with the cultural heritage of their home regions in all its diversity and are working on its relevance for the present. Some members have already been recruited during the founding of the new Forum in Fujairah, but this process is to be extended and intensified at the next ITI World Congress in September 2024.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The HDF aims to explore cultural heritage in the theatre and performing arts sector by focusing on the past and modern times, through the issues that arise in the applied context of heritage. Special emphasis is given to the practical and operational implementation of cultural heritage projects and events, especially through festivals, so that the complex relationships of cultural heritage in the field of theatre development to be explored in depth.

The HDF goals to focus on the vast history of European drama from ancient Greek drama through to nineteenth-century theatre, focusing on identity and diversity. Specifically, the HDF goals are to research and study the ancient theatre as a special theatrical code and as a cultural phenomenon, the surviving ancient dramatic texts in terms of philological and theatrical context, theatre venues and archaeological testimonies in general, as well as the reception of ancient Greek and Roman drama. Furthermore, the objectives include the study of traditional theatre to modern and contemporary European literature, theatre, dance, cinema, and other forms of art. Throughout history, drama has performed and represented political, religious, national, ethnic, class-related, gendered, and individual concepts of identity.

To sum up, the HDF has eight objectives:

- 1) to research and study the history of European theatre as a history of identity;
- 2) to approach theatre interdisciplinary and comprehensively both as a literary genre as well as a complete theatrical event but also, of course, as a cultural phenomenon;
- 3) to promote the theatre's history and define the strategic framework for preserving and managing the region's cultural heritage and diversity;
- 4) to recognize the contemporary forms of theatre as part of the world's cultural heritage;
- 5) to explore the morphological and semantic elements that are used by modern directors to make ancient drama and theatrical tradition accessible and comprehensible by contemporary audiences; and
- 6) to create a field of cooperation between the professionals of the theatre and the performing arts in the approach, methodology and development of the theatre as part of the cultural heritage of each country;
- 7) to foster an inclusive notion of theatre that brings Europe's social, linguistic, and cultural heritage to audiences and communities in Europe and beyond;
- 8) to collaborate with European and international festivals and platforms that present performances of ancient Greek drama through to nineteenth-century theatre.

MEETINGS

Following the 36th ITI World Congress (2023), there were numerous and very inspiring Zoom meetings and conversations between the members from May 2023 until June 2024 (a total of six meetings).

The first meetings were focused on exchanging ideas and opinions about the potential projects, collaborations and activities of the HDF towards achieving its main goals. A plan was formed for future activities, but also for establishing the base of the HDF structure and the recruitment of new members to enhance the HDF dynamics.

ANTIGONE PROJECT

In order to get to know each other more concretely and to actively engage old and new members, the "Antigone Project" was agreed upon. The Project aims to create a collage of interpretations and approaches to a specific excerpt selected from Sophocles' tragedy "Antigone". More specifically, the excerpt refers to Creon and Antigone debating the merits of their positions.

Each member of the HDF is responsible for staging/producing/playing the "Antigone" scene in a freely chosen setting (theatre, street, kitchen etc.), recording it and bringing it into a joint presentation.

During the 37th ITI World Congress and the Committees Meeting, the HDF will present the concept of the Project aiming to invite new members to join and participate by contributing with their productions to the completion of a collage, which will highlight the diversity of artistic approaches and multicultural dimensions assumed by the ancient Greek drama as a universal heritage through showcasing "Antigone". The Project will be completed at the end of 2025 and will be presented to the public, via social media, in March 2025 on the occasion of World Theatre Day.

OTHER COLLABORATIONS & ACTIVITIES

- A) Another concrete project is planned within the HDF membership led by the Vice-President of HDF, Matthias Gehrt: Zaza Muchemwa (Zimbabwe) will stage a production at the Krefeld-Mönchengladbach Theatre in the 2024/25 season as part of the "Non-European Theatre" series.
- B) The HDF members decided to support the "17th International Symposium on Ancient Greek Drama" which will be organised by the Deputy Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Cyprus and the Cyprus Centre of the International Theatre Institute on November 2-3, 2024 in Nicosia. The topic of the 17th edition of the "International Symposium on Ancient Greek Drama" is: "*The role of mythos in ancient tragedy: 'mythos' as 'plot', or 'plot' as 'mythological narrative'?*" The "International Symposium on Ancient Greek Drama" began in 1990 as an activity of the then Committee of Cultural Identity and Development of the International Theatre Institute and has since been organised, regularly every other year, by the Deputy Ministry of Culture and the Cyprus Centre of the International Theatre Institute.

Members of the "Heritage and Diversity Forum (HDF)"

Christos GEORGIU (Cyprus), *President*
Matthias GEHRT (Germany), *Vice President*
Lina TAL (Jordan),
Zaza MUCHEMWA (Zimbabwe),
Okbaoui CHEIKH (Algeria),
Mohamed SHASHAA (Palestine),
Ayad Kadhim AL- SALAMI (Iraq)