

Playing Identities, Performing Heritage |
Theatre, Creolisation, Creation and the Commons



Project Description,
Call for Applicants and Project Manifesto

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Introduction

Do you want to spend two weeks, all expenses paid, in sunny Italy in the summers of 2015/16? Do you want to collaborate with theatre students from Romania, Lithuania and Spain to make theatre about an issue you care about? Do you want your show to receive its world premiere in Siena during the summer of 2016 along with three other shows by fellow students?

Playing Identities, Performing Heritage is a large EU-funded multi-institutional project which invites students from different countries to make devised theatre in collaboration with each other in order to study how different European identities are shaped and performed.

It is an exciting opportunity to travel, meet and collaborate with students of theatre from different countries, to receive guidance and tuition from theatre-makers from across Europe and to get your work shown and talked about internationally.



Project Description

What is European heritage, and how does it differ from local or national contexts? How are our contemporary identities shaped as Europe grows and changes? What do we already share across borders, what do we already have in common?

We invite proposals of topics for performance from groups of four students to take part in the project *Playing Identities, Performing Heritage* – a project which seeks to explore notions of heritage, identity and citizenship through performance and which takes part across institutions in Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Romania and the UK.

The project aims to study how performances made in and across different European landscapes speak to each other, and how new shared, creole identities emerge from the process of devising such performances across borders.

The project's manifesto can be found at the back of this document; please familiarise yourself with the project, its aims and its ethos before submitting your application. Please also email the contacts on the front page of this document to register your interest as soon as possible: we will be able to answer any questions you may have, and we will accompany you at every step of your application.

Project Timeline

1. By **April 2015**, students are invited to submit proposals, four of which (one from each country) will be chosen to take part for the duration of the project (exact date tbc)
2. By **May 2015**, four young theatre makers will be also be chosen to work on a project from a country other than their own (date tbc)
3. From **12th - 26th July 2015**, the chosen groups and directors will be invited to a 2-week workshop in Siena, where they will have the opportunity to work with mentors and scholars from across the four institutions, and where they will begin to devise their performances
4. In **Autumn 2015** the four theatre makers will travel to their host countries for a period of preliminary fieldwork
5. In **Spring 2016** the groups of performers and the theatre makers will each work on their projects in their host countries
6. The project will culminate in a festival in **Siena in July 2016**.

PLEASE NOTE: when submitting your application, make sure all members will be available to take part in the workshop in Siena from 12th - 26th July 2015. Please also make sure you will be able to attend the final workshop and festival in Siena in July 2016.

Application Process

We are looking for **six individuals** to fulfil **3 specific roles** within *Playing Identities, Performing Heritage*: (i) one group of four performers, (ii) one young theatre maker, (iii) one community mobiliser.

IF YOU WISH TO APPLY FOR ANY OF THE ROLES BELOW PLEASE EMAIL THE CONTACTS ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THIS DOCUMENT TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST BEFORE MAKING YOUR APPLICATION.

(i) Groups of four performers

We invite **groups of four students** to put forward 300 words on a topic, theme or issue you would like to use as the basis for a devised piece of theatre made collaboratively as detailed above.

At this stage, you do not need to tell us how you imagine the performance: just the topic. Please also include all four participants' names.

We encourage topics related to your **local** social, cultural or political situation which you believe **could resonate across different European contexts**. As such, we encourage you to think as broadly as possible about your local topic: is it part of a wider trans-European phenomenon? Are the effects, or indeed the causes of your issue locatable elsewhere? How do other areas deal

with similar issues? How might the topic be in conversation with other European situations? You do not need to know the answers to these questions, but they are good questions to have in mind.



As well as the 300 words, we ask you to put forward the name and a person description (150 words) of somebody who could act as a link between yourselves and your topic (for example someone who is passionate about the subject, who works within your topic's field, or who has some insider knowledge about it). S/he would act as the project's 'mobiliser': s/he should be able to help you in your research, collaborate with you throughout the process and take responsibility for your project's presence on social media. While we do ask you, where possible, to nominate someone as a mobiliser, this role will not be set in stone until a formal call for mobilisers is circulated, and formal interviews are held later in the term (this is a paid position).

The four performers MUST be free for travel in July 2015 and July 2016, and free to work on the project in Kent in spring 2016 (possibly during the break). Please do not apply unless you know you will be able to commit to the project throughout its duration.

(ii) Young Theatre Makers

In April - May 2016 we will invite young theatre makers to submit applications to take part in the project. Once four projects from the four different countries have been chosen (each put forward by a group of four students), applying theatre makers will be asked to provide a sketch, a vision, or a possible scenario (no more than one page of A4) for a performance based on the chosen topics.

Please note that the young theatre maker will be asked to submit three sketches for three different performances, each based on one of the three topics put forward by countries other than his/her own (for example, the UK theatre maker will provide three sheets of A4 detailing plans for the topics from Spain, Lithuania and Romania).



The young theatre maker MUST be free for travel in July 2015 and July 2016, as well as for another two trips to their host country in autumn 2015 and spring 2016. While we will do our best to make travel compatible with all schedules involved, please do not apply unless you know you will be able to commit to the project throughout its duration.

(iii) Community Mobiliser.

In May 2016 we will be looking to employ an individual able to play the role of 'mobiliser' for the chosen project. Details on the process and on the role will be circulated in due course. Please email us to register your interest, and we'll make sure you're kept in the loop.

Playing Identities, Performing Heritage | **Project Manifesto**

1. Heritage is not a set of dead things

Heritage can be understood as a set of things invested with either financial, emotional or symbolic values which are important to those who inherit them. In neo-Latin languages, the word “heritage” (from the Latin, *patrimonium*) means “the father’s duty”, that is the act of donating something to the children to be remembered by them. Inheritance is an active process of transmission which involves knowledge and awareness, because it is necessary to comprehend the meaning of cultural assets in order to understand our identity as a kind of living and continuously evolving heritage.

2. Heritage must be performed to be kept alive

Each time we encounter artworks or social landscapes, we try to read them somehow. Then, in order to remember what we see, we usually share it by telling the story of our seeing. But the story is not always the same: it changes according to both the listeners’ and narrators’ knowledge and personal choices. That is how memories also evolve and change slightly over time.

Cultural heritage remains alive only when its meaning is transmitted and shared through narration and embodiment. Hence we can see heritage as not solely something which concerns the past, but as a current living memory for the future.

3. The sharing of narratives creates both heritage and a community built around it

Sharing stories makes space for different interpretations of heritage: this is how we form a common memory, which is the base for a common identity.

Narration is perhaps the best tool we have to grasp both the tangible and the intangible entities around us – such as objects, places, knowledge. If diverse people put their heritage in common, this can create a shared memory that activates a sense of common belonging. Sharing our heritage could foster the collective creation of a tradition – one which could become the root for a new, shared common identity. The process of sharing our heritage, then, could contribute to the development of new forms of citizenship based on ‘living’ heritage.

4. Identity is the outcome of a collective negotiation on multiple levels

Every story told makes present the world view of he/she who tells it, his/her cultural heritage, and locates the actors within it. Any narrative, be it created through words or images, displays a plurality of identities and, in a multicultural context, the configuration of those identities can shift according to the different viewpoints of those who tell and those who listen.

Identities are always constructed in a context of social interaction. And as they are made of a living and continuously evolving heritage, identities are continuously reshaped and renegotiated through cultural and social experiences.

5. Creolisation is a model for understanding the negotiation of identities in contemporary society

Creolisation is a process of encounter through which subjects are able to reconstitute, reshape, redefine and recognise their identities. People use interrelated identities strategically in their interactions with a range of others whom they encounter, and play different roles in different contexts.

Differently from the model of "integration", which understands the cultural encounters only from the dominant point of view, and differently from "multiculturalism", which neutralises and hides that dominant point of view behind a universalising presumed sense of equality, creolisation always takes into account two or more points of view in tension.

6. Encounter provides inclusive ways of performing heritage

Creolisation is a way to mix and reconstitute pre-existing codes of self-representation as a claim to new social, political and cultural identities. Creolisation always involves two or more points of view in conflict, but because every point of view involved mutates and transforms in the process, the result is always mutually inclusive.

A creole identity is mainly played out through narration, which frames social interaction and makes it meaningful and effective on the grounds of a shared understanding of the world.

The face to face cultural encounter – involving narration and impersonation – helps different identities to become aware of their creolised heritage.

7. Theatre as a medium of performance is a construction site of identities

The theatre offers a space for subjectivities to be displayed and performed, and can also offer an arena for cultural encounters to take place. As a medium, the theatre is always conscious of how identities are negotiated, formed and performed; the theatre also comprehends how every single action or gesture takes on symbolic value, whose impact will act out differently for different spectators both in the moment and in memory. Because the theatre as a medium manipulates and performs ideological discourses, given meanings, patterns of behaviour, social beliefs and aesthetic principles, it can be seen as a creole medium in itself: the process of working with identities at play entails a conscious performance of heritage.

8. Theatre can trigger social innovation through performing heritage

Stories, identities, memories arrive to the stage via different means, and can sometimes offer models of the world as it could be. By virtue of sharing the experience of spectating, the audience could be seen as a new community, constituting itself around what it understands as the meaning of what members can see, and putting their feelings about what they see in common. As such, the theatre can be seen as a privileged locus for producing shifts in mindset in those present: it can be used to challenge or reinforce what the assembled audience, or indeed the performers, might understand as identity.

9. Through performance, actors affect the social and cultural values of the context in which they live

As professionals of performance, theatre performers and actors are always and unavoidably engaged in understanding how identities play out and in how they are reshaped over space and time. It is because of this skill that performers are able to make present and available to an audience facts of which audiences may be unaware. In their attunement to how identities are played out, performers understand and display the shifting nature of identities, and do so in a way which is significant and intentional. The fact of acting on stage implies an acting upon memory, heritage and identity; hence acting has a political value.

10. Theatre can be seen as an experimental field for societal challenges

If it is seen as a place for imagining the world as it could be, theatre can be understood as a laboratory in which societal issues are condensed and synthesised. This project seeks to observe the collective theatre-making process of artists from different backgrounds because those processes may offer glimpses into how common heritage can be negotiated, shaped and acted out. The fact of making theatre through a collection of experiences (regarding objects, places, public spaces, events past or present) is a process in which different things are put in common in order to be transformed into something shared and collectively understood. This collective understanding relies also on the involvement of the audience, who need to participate in how meaning in common is made. Through watching processes of collective acting out and putting in common, we hope to understand what a contemporary, creolised European citizenship may look like, and whether it could push our historical borders (between individuals, groups, countries) to breaking point. Through the proposed project, theatrical performances collectively devised through experimental approaches will be observed for their capacity to (re)present and (re)shape political, social and historical relationships within what we see as the contemporary creole European society.

More on the project can be found here:

<http://www.playingidentities.eu/>

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/arts/news-summary.html?view=552>

<http://www.panspeech.eu/component/content/article/19-playingidentities/98-playing-identities-performing-heritage>

We look forward to receiving your expressions of interest!

All photos in this document are taken from previous incarnations of the *Playing Identities* project. The photo on the front page is a lovely vista of Siena at night.