



EUROPEAN THEATRE TALKS #3

FREE CULTURE - RESISTING POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Audiences were invited to the flagship event where policy meets theatre, during the ETC International Theatre Conference in Liège, 'The European Theatre Talks: Free Culture - Resisting Political Interference'.

Recognising the rise of far-right governments around Europe – who have dismissed theatre directors that they see as too challenging and replaced them with more deferential candidates – the session was a chance to receive more input on the realities across Europe and identify potential solutions.



MONDAY 04 NOVEMBER 2024

Liège, BELGIUM



Intervening from the audience was Mladen Aleksiev, Head of International Relations at National Theatre Ivan Vazov in Sofia/Bulgaria, who detailed a troubling campaign of intimidation surrounding the upcoming production of 'Arms and the Man', directed by the acclaimed artist John Malkovich, which premieres on 7th November. You can read a detailed comment from the theatre [on the ETC website](#).

2024 has been a challenging year for freedom of expression in the arts.

Far-right governments are on the rise around Europe, and increasingly prone to interfering in the running of public institutions – by dismissing directors that they see as too challenging and replacing them with more deferential candidates.

This edition of the European Theatre Talks focused on the increasing restrictions of freedom of expression in a European context, with interventions from artists, cultural figures and policymakers that work closely on themes of artistic freedom and democracy.



In this context the event served as a strong reminder of the relevance of theatre to society, through inputs from senior representatives from the European Commission; investigative journalism outfit Correctiv; Austrian playwright Elfriede Jelinek; European cultural networks Pearle* and Opera Europa; and a condensed insight into the sobering State of Culture Report by Culture Action Europe.



Concluding the session with a clear commitment to artistic freedom, Georg Häusler, Director for Culture, Creativity and Sport at the European Commission, said:

“We need to make sure that you are listened to in this debate, that you have a strong voice, that you occupy the territory and don’t leave it to those who have some very vile objectives when they use culture and cultural policy in portraying their political priorities.”

