

KNOWLEDGE POOL NEXT STAGE PROJECT

Personal contributions from the participants of the Young Creatives Incubation Program, each exploring a specific area of international management and creative production in the performing arts.

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NEXT STAGE

- INTERNATIONAL INCUBATOR PROGRAM FOR EMERGING PROFESSIONALS IN THE INDEPENDENT PERFORMING ARTS SCENE

Next Stage is a collaboration formed in 2023 between three emerging producers and their associated organisations: Mara Nedelcu (DE)/ Nedelcu & Hauser Gbr; Brigitta Kovács (HU)/ Workshop Foundation; Nikos Mavrakis (GR)/ TooFarEast.

The project is built on the notion to foster sustainable support structures in the performing arts that can serve as a safety net and solid background for emerging and mid-career artists in Europe. The partners offer an international incubation program for a new generation of managers, who can collaborate with more experienced colleagues to create safe spaces and sustainable career paths for emerging and mid-career artists. It aims to strengthen the resilience of micro-organisations and associated artists.

The initiators are key professionals in their respective local communities, and already have great experience in the international performing arts scene as well, working with several artists and organizations in the field – however, they are experiencing a barrier to upscale their activities due to the sectoral and political challenges.

The project offers an incubation for their management initiatives through three main pillars.

Young Creatives Incubation Program: On-the-job upskilling program that offers a holistic overview of the international performing arts scene for emerging and newcomer managers.

Knowledge sharing events: An international workshop series tackling key aspects of international collaborations: fair practices considering the different cultural and socio-political contexts; cross-border collaborations in time of environmental crisis; diversity aspects.

International mobility opportunities: To expand the international network of cultural managers and associated artists, offer dialogue opportunities with international peers, and improve the visibility of the Eastern European performing arts field in the sector.

More information about the project:
www.nextstageproject.com

A video about the project can be watched here:



WORKSHOP FOUNDATION:

Workshop Foundation was set up in 1992 with the aim of providing support for independent artists, encouraging their artistic development in order to facilitate the development of the Hungarian contemporary dance scene as a whole. Its main strategic objective is the encouragement of border-crossing – both geographically and among artistic disciplines. Led by director Gergely Talló, the organization **works with nearly 300 Hungarian and foreign artists yearly and runs 4 studios**. Their work supports independent performing artists by offering infrastructure, administrative and production help, career development support, consultations, education. In 2018 they have set up the **Artist Partnership Programme, focusing on emerging and mid-career artists**. The goal of the programme is to follow a given artist's work and career on a long-term basis and provide him/her/them with personalized support through regular professional consultation, sharing of (professional) contacts, providing infrastructure for the rehearsal period of a given production, joint application for grants, financial management and administration, fulfilling management tasks, co-operation and co-planning.

The Foundation plays a **crucial role in advocating for better conditions in the independent performing arts scene and the international representation of the Hungarian professional community in the field**. They have an extensive and branching, well-functioning net of international liaisons and is one of those Hungarian organizations that are internationally recognized and widely known. Their **existence throughout different cultural political landscapes** through 3 decades demonstrates **strong resilience** and their **ability to build long term alliances** to rely on, **innovate and daringly stand up for artistic freedom and democratic values**.

<https://wsf.hu/>



NEDELKU & HAUSER:

Nedelcu & Hauser production office is a structure dedicated to the management of artistic projects in the field of performing arts. In this frame, the managing partners Mara Nedelcu and Franziska Hauser are building a solidary environment for artistic initiatives and interdisciplinary exchange to unfold while being dedicated to the ongoing inquiry of the potential of art and culture for everyday life. Committed to sustainability, care practices, and inclusive approaches internationally, they collaborate with artists, public and private organisations or funding bodies from their region as well on international level. They are co-founders of the professional collective Kompliz:innen.space.

We are aware of the privilege of operating in a professional landscape which benefits from a highly structured, well-funded performing arts ecosystem, with opportunities spanning local, national, and international scales. In this context, we commit to artist production processes which focus on embracing common values and work ethics. Therefore we aim at building an inclusive and supportive work environment of flexible work models, which can accommodate specific needs of the different participants, either artists, peers or audiences.

For more information

Produktionsbände: a network for production managers, producers, art workers, strategists and those who see themselves as protagonists of artistic production in the independent performing arts.

<https://komplizinnen.space/>

Kompliz:innen

TOOFAREAST:

Founded in 2018, **ToofarEast** is a production company based in Athens, focusing on the international development, touring, and promotion of contemporary dance, theatre, and performance. Led by cultural manager Nikos Mavrakis, active in the field since 2014, TFE has collaborated with major institutions such as the Athens Epidaurus Festival, Onassis Stegi, Greek National Opera and Eleusis 2023 – European Capital of Culture. The company has collaborated with artists like Mario Banushi, Romeo Castellucci, Chara Kotsali, Christiana Kosiari, Euripides Laskaridis, Prodromos Tsinikoris, Sasha Waltz and others, and is known for combining high artistic quality with socially inclusive approaches. In 2025, they are taking over the management and **reviving Thessaloniki's historic experimental Amalia Theatre to support emerging artists.**

<https://toofareast.com/>



KNOWLEDGE POOL

NEXT STAGE PROJECT

PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE YOUNG CREATIVES INCUBATION PROGRAM, EACH EXPLORING A SPECIFIC AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND CREATIVE PRODUCTION IN THE PERFORMING ARTS.

Foreword

The performing arts are, by their very nature, collaborative. They exist in the spaces between people — between artist and audience, between local context and international exchange, between creative impulse and the systems that sustain it. The Young Creatives Incubation Program was founded upon this spirit of connection: to offer emerging producers, managers, and artists an environment to learn from each other, to share knowledge across borders, and to build a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable performing arts ecosystem.

This **Knowledge Pool** grew out of the participants' shared desire to document and exchange what they have learned along this journey. Rather than a handbook in the traditional sense, it is a mosaic of perspectives — lived experiences, reflections, and practical insights — written by those actively shaping the future of the independent performing arts sector. Each contribution offers a personal entry point into the complex field of international management, touching on essential aspects such as production workflows, marketing and communication strategies, programming models, guest management, and the balance between artistic and administrative practice. Through these pages, readers encounter the realities of building a career in a transnational landscape.

The **Next Stage Project**, supported by the **Creative Europe Programme**, exists to strengthen the independent performing arts field by fostering exchange and professional development. This publication continues that mission, turning individual experience into shared knowledge. It invites young producers, managers, and artists to learn from one another — and to recognize that international collaboration begins not with systems, but with people.

— The Next Stage Project Team, 2025

MEET THE
YOUNG
CREATIVES



MY JOURNEY INTO THE HIDDEN WORLD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

FROM BUDAPEST TO NEW YORK

BY ESZTER LOVRITY

In the past two years, I've worked as a production assistant and tour manager in the performing arts. I've experienced the thrill of international tours, the chaos of last-minute changes, and the challenge of balancing artistic vision with real-world logistics.

Sometimes I was a guest, sometimes a host, and each role revealed different challenges from managing a festival in the heart of Manhattan to coordinating a multi-week European tour with 20 performances in a row.

Along the way, I learned lessons I wish I had known from day one: how to anticipate problems, communicate clearly under pressure, and create systems that keep performances running smoothly. These are lessons I've collected for my past self – and for anyone stepping into the world of performing arts production.

But what is production?

A production is the invisible structure that holds a performance together: the planning, the people, the places, and all the details that allow art to reach its audience. It's the bridge between creative vision and real-world logistics. Behind every moment on stage, there's a web of preparation that makes it possible.

I wanted to create a **manual, a practical list of questions** that might bring you some clarity and comfort while navigating the world of performing arts production.

PREPARATIONS:

- **Scheduling:** Who goes where and does what? Make a timetable! Don't make the schedule too tight. Allow for some leeway. Unplanned things always come up.
- **Emergency needs and local possibilities:** Think ahead about essential services such as shops, agencies, and restaurants — these can differ greatly between a small town and a big city.
- **Key contacts:** Get to know your important contacts and the full range of services provided by the venues (printing, selling tickets, opening the doors, cleaning the stage).
- **Potential issues:** Understand the critical or delicate points in realizing the project. (If there are fragile objects, complex technical needs, or tasks requiring special attention).
- **Avoid uncertainty:** Try to minimize answers like "We'll figure it out somehow".
- **Legal frameworks:** Make sure everyone can work within the proper legal parameters — contracts, insurances, tax numbers, legal requirements depend on different countries.
- **Travel and transport:** Plan transfers for both the artists and the set (including ATA Carnet and insurance if applicable and don't forget, that not everyone is good in orientation and foreign languages).

- **Choose your most trusted colleagues:** Minimize interpersonal stress by clearly communicating about how the task are going to be dispersed among the crew.
- **Technical documentation:** Make sure all technical riders, light plots, sound cues, and stage plans are up to date and shared with the venue's technical staff well in advance.

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS:

- **Counting visitors:** Always needed for reports.
- **Handling cash:** If you have to handle cash (e.g. in the box office) count it very carefully and track where it comes from and where it goes.
- **Online transactions and card payments:** Keep track of who pays what, on behalf of who, and ensure payments are processed correctly.
- **Invoices and receipts:** Always know which documents to keep and which to forward, for example, to the accountant.
- **Budget management:** Know the detailed budget of the performance, monitor expenses, and find solutions if the budget is exceeded.
- **Communication with the venue:** Handle contracts, payments, and financial queries with the venue team.
- **Tax and legal obligations:** Be aware of tax rules, VAT, or other legal financial requirements in different countries.
- **Contingency planning:** Set aside a small emergency fund for unexpected expenses if possible (transport delays, technical repairs, etc.).

COMMUNICATION ON SITE:

- **Regular check-ins:** Briefly meet with the team at the start and end of the day to align tasks and address any issues.
- **Warm and approachable communication:** Be friendly and easygoing, even when the situation is challenging.
- **Problem-focused, not blame-focused:** Address issues without blaming others.
- **Discretion and appreciation:** Avoid gossip and recognize people's efforts.
- **Setting boundaries:** If someone is overstepping, being too direct, or causing problems for the team, speak with them transparently and respectfully.
- **Delegating tasks:** Assign responsibilities clearly among the team to ensure smooth workflow.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Be aware of cultural differences when communicating with international teams.
- **Build professional connections:** Take opportunities to meet venue staff, local artists, and other production teams.

LOGISTICS:

- **Set and equipment management:** Know which parts of the set are rented, from where, when they arrive, and when they must be returned.
- **Transfers and transport:** Arrange transportation as needed, including renting vehicles if necessary.
- **Coordination on site:** Oversee setup and strike (building and wrapping the set) to ensure everything runs smoothly.
- **Communication with transport and venue staff:** Confirm arrival times, access points, and any special handling needs.

POST PRODUCTION:

- **Recontact the venue to say big thanks.** For leaving a good impression matters, as maybe you wanna come back.
- **Reports and accounting:** Write reports, gather all invoices, and send them to the accountant.
- **Documentation and archiving:** Provide photos and other materials for communication, and store contracts, technical riders, set lists, and documentation in an organized way for future reference.
- **Payments:** Ensure all transfers and invoices are paid correctly and sent to the right recipients.
- **Closing meeting:** Organize a final meeting to review the project, discuss lessons learned, and close any outstanding tasks. Listen to the team's feedback!

BONUS TIPS

- **Personality counts:** Don't be shy, but know your limits — no pressure.
- **Instant reactions:** In this field, if something is said, it's often taken as fact.
- **Make sure to take some Private Time:** Caring for others can be exhausting.
- **When on a tour, good food matters:** Keep yourself and the team well-fed — it really helps morale. Also everyone is more happy if there is coffee.
- **Communication channels:** Agree on how the team will stay in touch.
- **Speak up when needed:** Some issues must be communicated clearly rather than assumed.
- **Werk photos:** Try to recognize your teams best moments, take photos, and keep good memories for later (and for social media).

CONCLUSION

As you probably recognized, there are overwhelmingly numerous roles that can be associated with a production manager. It would be a lie to say that I managed to fulfill all of them while working on a project. I think this list highlights the problem of this role's vagueness and the need of a job description each time. Your job depends on the selection of the roles you choose to fulfill, and your personality. Some people are strong in refusing requests, some are not, but being aware of your "decline level " is important. But whatever happens, keep in mind: there is no perfect production, as no one and nothing is perfect.

MY JOURNEY INTO THE HIDDEN WORLD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

HOW TO... 54 SHOWINGS - 27 COMPANIES - 3 DAYS

BY ANNEGRET DEBITZ, YOUNG CREATIVE AT NEDELCO & HAUSER, DUSSELDORF

As a Young Creative of the Next Stage Project, I had the opportunity to join the production team of a massive international event, having to organize 54 showings within 3 days.

It's all about prep!

The challenge wasn't scale; it was coordination of many people and things happening at the same time. The more precisely each step was planned in advance, the more freedom there was once the festival began.

There are certain deadlines for when companies must submit or request information. Staying within these deadlines and keeping the companies on track is one of the tasks in production.

- ✓ Send out confirmations and invitations.
- ✓ Send invitation letters upon request.
- ✓ Finalize contracts.
- ✓ Send out invitations to the morning coffee meeting and maintain a registration list.
- ✓ Request any missing promotional material (in consultation with the communications department).
- ✓ Request props: Only if it is clear that the company will need them. Otherwise, consult with the companies upon request.
- ✓ Request number of performers for allocation of warm-up spaces
- ✓ Send artist registration reminder
- ✓ Final information letter: contact details, address, times, technology, props, morning coffee, request for free tickets, information on where to collect badges
- ✓ Send list of booked tickets to companies Production wizard or
- ✓ Send moderator briefing

WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Maintain good communication within the team
and optimize cooperation.
Assess the strengths and weaknesses of your team.
Responsibility also means care-work.

The better the internal team works, the better the outcome.

Communication is key

Working with international companies taught me that communication is not about language — it's about clarity. English may be the common tongue, but it's rarely anyone's first language. Words carry different assumptions, especially when they describe production realities.

Working titles like "Open Studio" can be understood differently from person to person. I learned to describe processes, not titles. To ask for photos when people referred to props or technical devices. To give "too much" rather than "too little" information.

Sometimes translation means explaining how things are done in a specific context — and being open to how others do it differently. The beauty of working internationally is discovering in which way your "normative" can be understood definitely by each other. Many infrastructures produce alternative forms of creativity.

This kind of administrative translation is part of what I've learned to explore with the Next Stage Project: developing a shared language for production work across diverse local contexts.

Let's hold on social empathy

International collaboration means navigating not only technical and linguistic differences but also cultural expectations. Gratitude, for example, takes many forms — a conversation, deep exchange, a quiet smile. Each gesture says: "I see you."

Production management is full of these micro-acts of care. They rarely make it into reports, but they are the connective tissue of the international arts field. They remind us that the human side of our work matters as much as the logistical one.

The work we do is not just organisational. It's social. It's how we, as a sector, process our shared realities — how we practice collaboration, inclusion, and resilience. Every schedule is a system of values. Every festival is a miniature model of society.

It's about making systems work for people, not the other way around. About creating environments where collaboration thrives across differences — cultural, linguistic, and structural.

MARKETING CHALLENGES IN INDEPENDENT PERFORMING ARTS

BY LILI STERN, YOUNG CREATIVE
AT WORKSHOP FOUNDATION, BUDAPEST

Personal Background Context

Over the past 1.5 years, I have been actively engaged in the marketing, public relations, and sales aspects of the Next Stage Project, contributing as a young creative within Hungary's independent dance and theater scene.

During my tenure at Next Stage Project, I took the lead in **designing and developing several organization's websites**, as well as **managing its social media** presence to strengthen engagement and visibility. In addition to this, I currently serve as the Communication Manager for the Workshop Foundation, one of the leading partner organizations within the Next Stage Project. The Foundation plays a central role in supporting and promoting independent dance and performance in Hungary, operating from its base in Budapest.

Over the past year, my focus has expanded to include **public relations and communication strategy for independent artists**. Notably, I served as the overall **Communication Manager for the 3rd Hungary Live Festival**, held in New York City in September 2025. In this capacity, I oversaw all communication efforts, from media outreach to strategic messaging, helping to elevate the profile of Hungarian independent performance arts on an international stage.

Through these experiences, I have honed my expertise in strategic communication, digital marketing, and arts promotion, while actively contributing to the growth and visibility of Hungary's independent performing arts community.

The Marketing Challenges

Since the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the marketing landscape has shifted dramatically:

- **Audience behaviors changed** — attention is harder to earn
- **Digital entertainment dominates**
 - Streaming, gaming, podcasts, digital media
- **Offline outings prioritize high-energy, social events**
 - Concerts, clubs, festivals > theater

Independent theaters now face a **double challenge**:

- remaining visible in a digital-first world **while competing with fast-paced entertainment choices**

Even strong content can feel like it disappears into a communication void due to:

- Algorithm changes
- Saturated social platforms What Actually Works

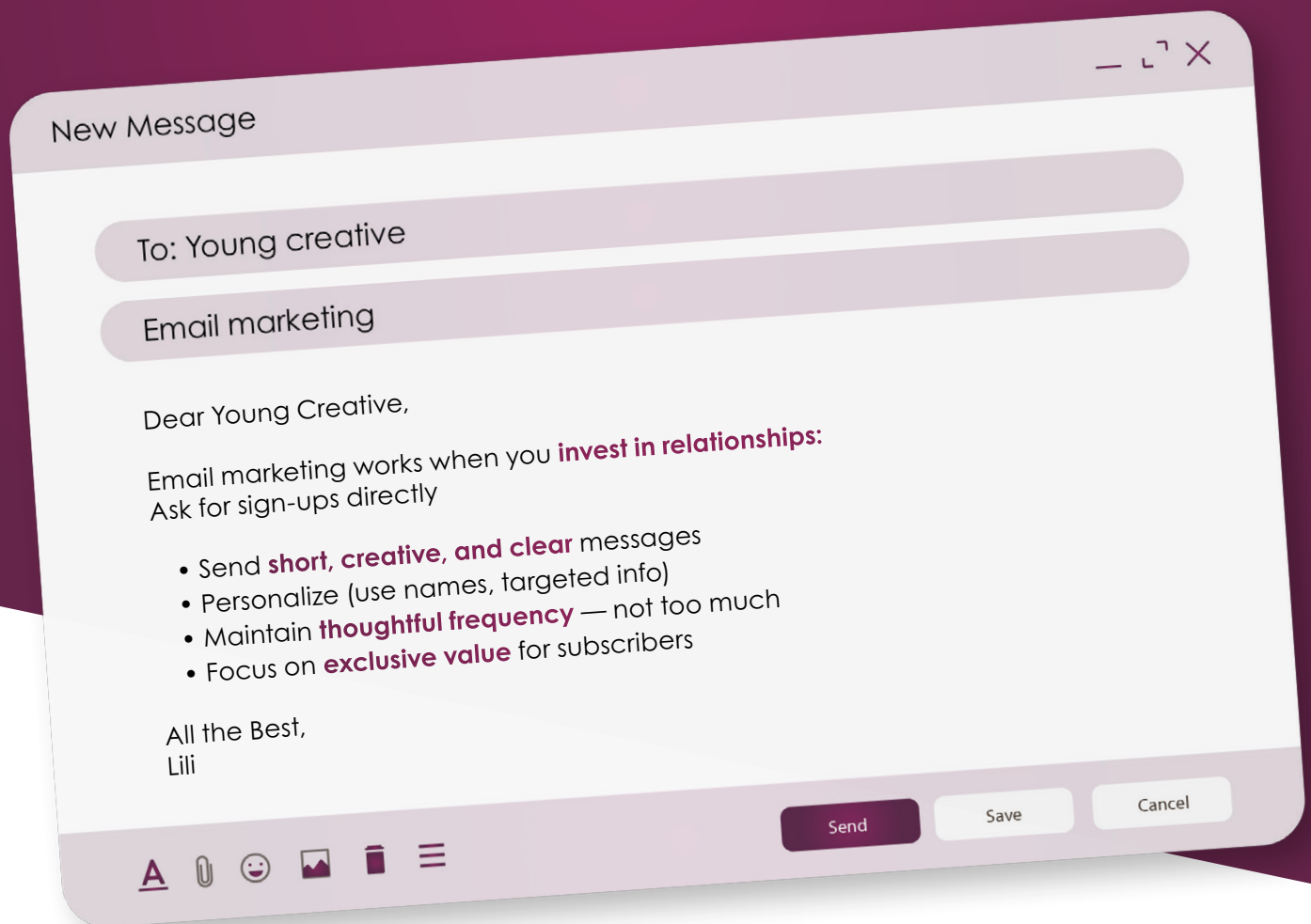
More thoughts: Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the landscape of marketing and sales has undergone significant transformation, evolving rapidly in response to shifting consumer behaviors and technological advancements. In my experience, the independent performing arts sector has become increasingly marginalized, struggling to maintain visibility both online and offline. This trend is driven, in part, by the intensifying competition for people's time and attention. Contemporary audiences are increasingly drawn to entertainment options that are convenient, easily accessible, and immersive, such as streaming platforms, video games, podcasts and other digital media. Even when individuals choose to leave their homes, their leisure choices often favor large-scale social experiences, such as festivals, concerts, or nightlife events, over more intimate or traditional theatrical venues. As a result, independent theaters face the dual challenge of remaining relevant in a rapidly digitizing cultural ecosystem while competing with the broader, more immediately gratifying options available to modern audiences.

WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS

My personal opinion on the most successful approaches to audience reach:

1. Email marketing
2. Facebook groups & online communities
3. Targeted Facebook & Instagram ads
4. Leveraging existing networks
5. Offline marketing strategies

1. Email Marketing



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2. Online Communities — Reaching Beyond Borders

When lacking personal contacts abroad, **online communities open doors:**



If you don't have direct connections with people abroad, online communities can be an invaluable resource. Platforms like Facebook groups, specialized forums, or other interest-based networks allow you to reach individuals who share your goals or areas of interest.

People often curate their online presence to reflect their personal interests, values, and experiences, which creates a sense of identity and belonging within these communities. By engaging in these spaces, you can connect with people who are already informed and invested in topics relevant to your needs. Participating actively, through discussions, sharing resources, or offering insights, helps build trust and meaningful connections, even across borders.

Online communities not only provide access to information but also allow you to cultivate relationships that can support collaboration, knowledge exchange, and long-term engagement with people worldwide.

3. Targeted Facebook & Instagram Advertising

Different events = different audiences.

We tailored campaigns by **event type**:

- Dance
- Concerts
- Workshops
- Theatre

Post-event feedback confirmed:

- Many attendees discovered events **through ads** directly in their feeds.

Even **€30 campaigns** can drive **high engagement**, if:

- The audience is well segmented
- The message is clear and relevant

More thoughts: Based on our experience with both the Hungarian and American festivals, we implemented highly targeted advertising campaigns tailored to the specific nature of each event. For instance, dance performances, concerts, workshops, and large theater productions each required distinct strategies, as the audiences for these events differed significantly. To refine our approach, we asked attendees how they had learned about the events. A significant number reported discovering upcoming performances through their social media feeds, confirming the effectiveness of well-placed digital ads.

By carefully segmenting audiences and customizing ad content to match the interests and expectations of each group, we were able to achieve impressive engagement even on a modest budget. In fact, with thoughtful planning and targeted placement, it is possible to create highly effective promotional campaigns for as little as €30, demonstrating that strategic advertising doesn't necessarily require a large investment.

The key takeaway from our experience is that understanding your audience and aligning your promotional efforts with their preferences can maximize reach, engagement, and attendance, making even tiny-scale campaigns remarkably impactful.

4. Activating Existing Networks

Collaboration is **not a bonus — it's survival** in the independent arts.

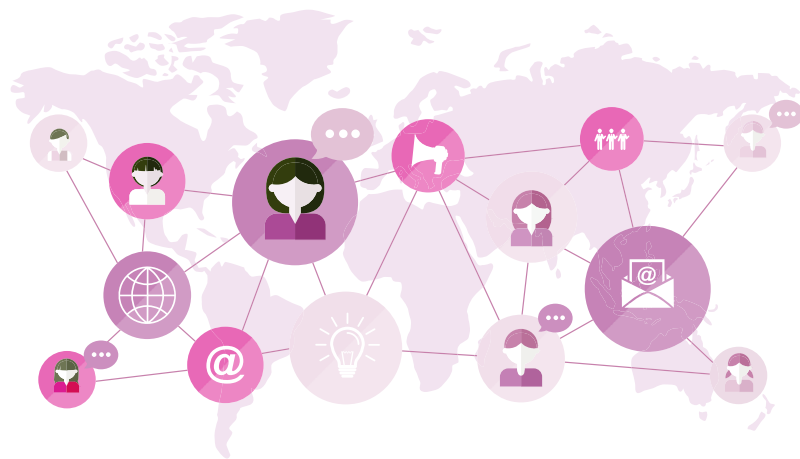
Success comes from:

- Shared goals
- Mutual visibility
- Trust-based partnerships

Benefits:

- Greater reach
- Stronger community
- Long-term sustainability

Partnerships are the **lifeblood** of independent arts.



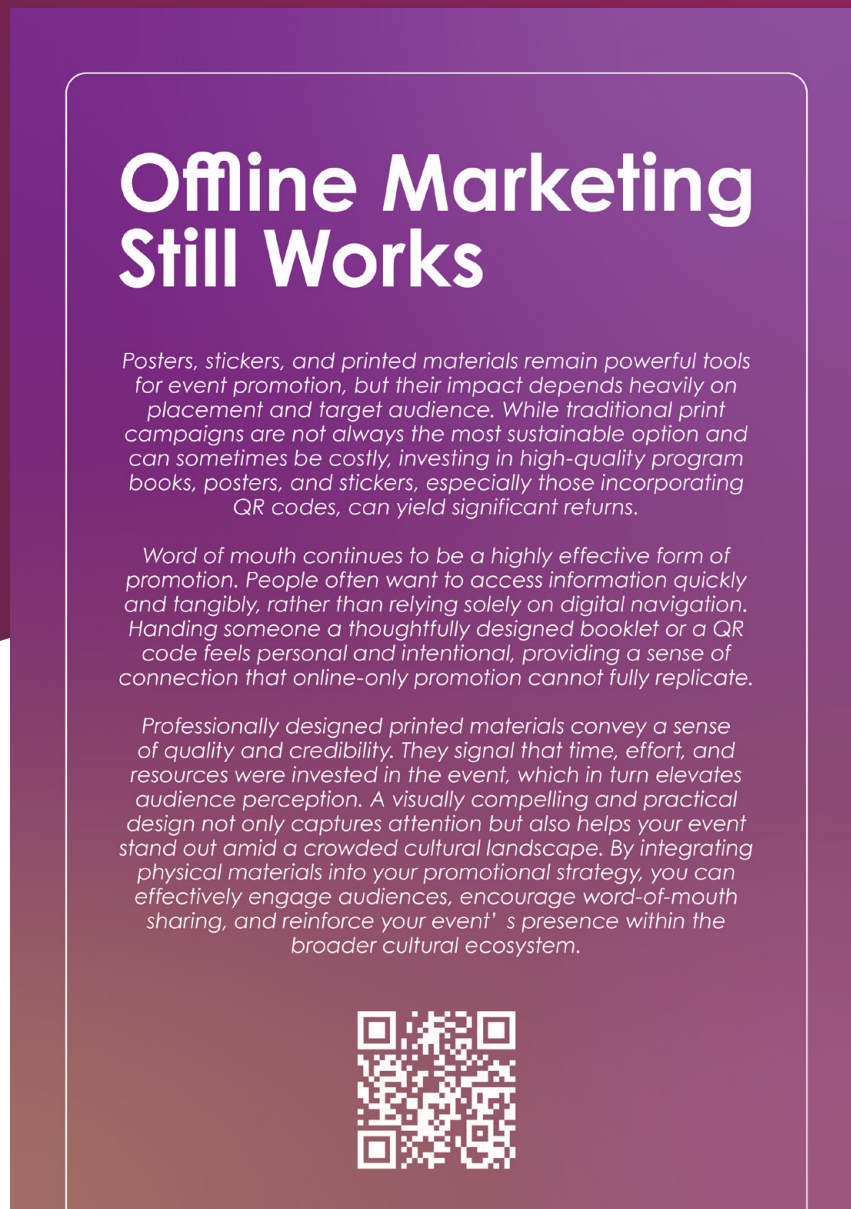
More thoughts: Without collaboration and partnerships, the independent arts scene simply could not thrive. Throughout my experience working on various festivals, individual productions, and cultural initiatives, I have come to realize that supporting one another's work is not just beneficial, it is essential. Equally important is the effort to identify a shared narrative or common values among partners, as this alignment amplifies the visibility and impact of both events and the behind-the-scenes work that makes them possible.

Collaboration creates a ripple effect of mutual benefit. When audiences are exposed to a wider range of performances and initiatives, they engage more deeply with the independent scene as a whole. Partners, in turn, have the opportunity to cultivate longer-term relationships built on trust and reciprocity, strengthening the network of support within the community. Trust, in particular, is a cornerstone of these partnerships. It allows independent arts managers and organizations to share resources, ideas, and expertise with confidence, fostering an environment where collective growth becomes possible.

For those of us operating in the independent arts sector, embracing collaboration is not merely a strategy, it is a sustainable path forward. By working together, we increase visibility, reach broader audiences, and establish a resilient ecosystem in which creativity, innovation, and shared values can flourish. Ultimately, partnerships are not just a tool for success; they are the lifeblood of the independent arts community.

5. Offline Marketing Still Works

The poster:



Final Thoughts

In today's marketing landscape—where every screen competes for attention and content moves faster than we can process—it is becoming increasingly clear that traditional, “old-school” methods still hold tremendous value. As digital saturation grows, people are craving experiences that feel personal, tangible, and thoughtfully crafted. Stepping away from the constant noise of social platforms allows us to create environments where audiences can slow down, connect, and truly absorb what is being shared.

By prioritizing substance over speed and curating content that aligns with what people genuinely care about, we open the door to more meaningful engagement. These intentional approaches encourage deeper relationships, foster trust, and ensure that messages resonate long after the moment has passed. In short, the future of attention may well lie in embracing the strengths of the past—returning to authenticity, presence, and the human desire for real connection.

TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE & TOURING

LIVE CHECKLIST: A TOOL FOR WELL-TEMPERED TOURING

BY ARISTEIDIS KREATSOULAS, YOUNG CREATIVE AT TOOFAREAST, ATHENS

Touring performances across different countries and venues requires a good level of technical coordination. As a producer I often find myself managing multiple projects at the same time, each with different technical riders, venues, production teams. Communication between the touring company and the presenting venue can become complex, especially when several conversations are happening simultaneously.

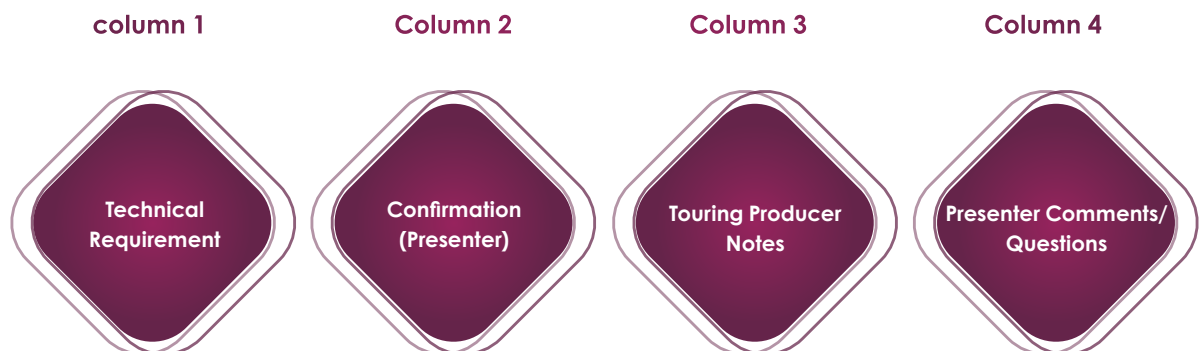
Over time, I have realized that the technical aspect of touring is one of the most sensitive parts of the process: even a small misunderstanding or delay in communication can result in major complications during setup or performance days. In an effort to minimize these risks and create a clearer workflow between the touring company and the hosting theatres, I have started developing a simple but efficient digital tool — a shared table that functions as a live checklist for all technical requirements of a touring performance.

This tool aims to automate part of the communication process and to ensure that both sides — the touring production team and the local technical crew — can keep track of what has been discussed, confirmed, or still needs attention. It becomes, in other words, a collaborative and transparent record of the production's technical evolution before the performance even arrives at the venue. The proposed tool brings together all essential information into a single shared document, structured as a live Excel (or Google Sheets) file. Its goal is to make technical communication more transparent, structured, and accessible, both for the touring producer and for the technical directors of each presenting venue.

By creating a standardized template, the tool helps me to maintain control and overview of multiple ongoing touring projects. It ensures that no critical element is overlooked and that every theatre involved in a tour progresses through the same verification process.

The Structure of the Tool

The table is designed to be simple. It includes four main columns, each serving a specific purpose:



• Column 1: Technical Requirement

This column lists all key technical elements that must be checked and confirmed before the arrival of the performance. The first part of the list includes general infrastructure requirements that apply to every show, such as:

Lighting equipment, sound system, stage dimensions, set-up crew, strike crew, masking materials, pre-rigging schedule.

The second part contains show-specific elements: fire effects, warm water on stage, special rigging points, wireless intercoms, microphone specifications, materials (e.g., 50 litres of sterilized soil), video projection equipment, etc.

• Column 2: Confirmation (Presenter)

Each technical director or production manager from the presenting venue checks this column. They can tick or mark each item once it has been confirmed, or add a status label such as *OK / In progress / Not available*. This visual cue immediately shows which parts of the technical rider have been addressed and which need further discussion.

• Column 3: Touring Producer Notes

This section includes links, references, and visual material provided by the touring producer. It can contain photographs of the set, video links of the performance, links to suppliers, or technical references (for example, a lighting plot, sound patch, or rigging diagram). This helps the presenter to understand exactly what is required and minimizes misinterpretations.

• Column 4: Presenter Comments / Questions

Here, the venue can add notes or questions related to specific items. For example, they might mention that a specific lighting fixture is not available but suggest an equivalent, or ask for clarification about an effect that requires special permission.

This shared document is updated in real time and can be accessed by both parties simultaneously. It functions as a live communication board, avoiding the need for long back-and-forth email threads or the risk of outdated attachments.

Technical Requirement	Confirmation (Presenter)	Touring Notes	Presenter Comments/ Questions
Lighting equipment	☒ Confirmed	Link to lighting plot	
Sound equipment	☒ In progress	Link to tech rider	
Set-up crew	☒ Confirmed		Confirm number of technicians
Rigging equipment	☐ Pending	Photo of rigging plan	Needs permission from local authority
Fire effect	☐ In progress	Video link to scene	
Warm water onstage	☐ Pending		To be arranged locally

Advantages of the Tool

1. All technical discussions are gathered in one place, reducing confusion and loss of information.
2. Both the touring and presenting teams can see progress in real time.
3. The tool automates repetitive administrative tasks by turning them into a checklist format, freeing up time for more creative and strategic work.
4. The same structure can be used for all touring projects, ensuring consistency and professional communication regardless of country or institution.
5. The final completed sheets can serve as an archive or database, helping to refine future tours or assist other producers working with the same artist.

Broader Implications

Although this tool may appear simple, it reflects a broader shift in how production management in the performing arts can evolve. In an increasingly digital working environment, producers and technical teams are asked to handle a growing amount of information while remaining flexible and responsive. Tools like this one demonstrate how digital collaboration platforms can strengthen the connection between artistic creation and technical implementation.

Finally, this system contributes to knowledge sharing among producers. The same template can be adapted and used by other professionals, creating a shared standard that facilitates touring across countries with different production traditions. It can even evolve into a more complex system, integrated with databases, calendars, or project management software.

Touring productions rely on coordination, precision, and trust. The proposed tool — a live, shared technical checklist — transforms a complex process into a clear, collaborative, and structured one. It is not a technological innovation in itself, but a methodological one: a way of rethinking how information flows within a touring context.

By automating and visualizing communication, it allows producers and technical directors to be on the same page, avoid unnecessary stress, and focus on what truly matters: a Well-Tempered staging of the performance.

In that sense, this tool is not only a piece of technical knowledge but also a form of care: care for detail, care for communication, and care for the artistic process that depends on both.

NETWORKING ACROSS BORDERS

BY ANNEGRET DEBITZ, YOUNG CREATIVE AT NEDELCU & HAUSER, DUSSELDORF

Starting Small, Thinking Big

When it comes to international networking, many people want to **travel the world**. At the same time, if you are lucky enough to operate in a context which values and supports international exchange, don't overlook opportunities for meaningful international connections **right at home**. **Festivals** can instigate little pop-up communities — everyone's there for the same reason, sharing the same energy. That makes starting conversations feel natural.

For a **creative producer**, networking isn't just an add-on. It's **part of the work** itself — learning who people are, what drives them, and how you might collaborate one day.

“Festivals are like temporary villages — the conversations you start there can turn into lifelong collaborations.”

”

When You're the Host

If you're working on the **production or hosting side**, networking is tricky. Your focus is on making sure everything runs smoothly — and that everyone else has a good time.

Days are long. Energy is limited. You might manage to connect with a few of the companies you're working closely with, but that's often it.

Still, some of the best conversations happen **after hours** — once the program ends, when everyone's unwinding with a drink in hand. That's when walls come down and new friendships come alive.

When You're the Guest

As a guest, everything shifts. You suddenly have **time to watch, listen, and talk**.

But being strategic helps. Before arriving, I ask myself:

- What do I want from this festival?
- Do I want to meet specific peers or curators?
- Am I promoting something — or looking for inspiration?

Knowing this shapes how I present myself. It's easier to answer:

“What brings you here?”
or
“What are you working on right now?”



Tailoring the Introduction

I like to **adapt my story** to the person I'm speaking with.

When meeting a festival director:

"I'm a creative producer specializing in festivals, currently expanding internationally."

When meeting an artist in a different field:

"I mostly work in dance and performance. Puppetry is new to me, but I love how close it brings the audience to the performer."

It's a small adjustment, but it shows curiosity — and that opens doors.

Workshops, Panels & The Power of Showing Up

Workshops, post-show talks, and panels are **perfect conversation starters**. Everyone there already shares your interests.

A simple comment like,

"I liked what you said in that discussion,"
can lead to a meaningful chat.

Many festivals even have **"first-timer" or "international guest" programs**. If they do — sign up. They're designed exactly for this.

Let Others Open Doors for You

Whenever possible, I love attending festivals with someone who **knows the scene**.

A simple introduction — *"You two should meet"* — goes a long way. Trust travels through people. It doesn't replace your own effort, but it helps conversations start on solid ground.

"Trust is key. If you find trust and friendship in a person,
it is more likely that cooperation will come together."

”

Look Beyond the Festival

Don't forget the city outside.

Sometimes the most interesting encounters happen **off-program** — in a small venue, a side performance, a café conversation. Those unplanned moments often leave the deepest impression.

Host or Guest — Seeing Both Sides

I started out as a **host** at international festivals in Germany. My role was to make sure guests felt comfortable — that everything worked smoothly behind the scenes.

Later, I began attending festivals as a guest. And I quickly realized something:
I actually **prefer hosting**.

Still, being a guest taught me a lot.

It reminded me what it feels like to **arrive somewhere new** — overwhelmed, curious, excited.

Gaining experience on both sides makes me a better producer.

Final Thought

Networking isn't about collecting contacts — it's about **building trust, staying curious, and constancy**. Every interaction adds a thread to the web that keeps our international creative community alive.

ARTISTIC MOBILITY AS A MOTOR FOR PEACE

BY TAMMO WALTER, YOUNG CREATIVE AT NEDELCO & HAUSER, DUSSELDORF

My intensive travelling to many festivals around the world has provided me with a deep insight and knowledge of the cultural circumstances and challenges, focusing on performing arts.

Mobility is thus not only a motor of cultural exchange and understanding. Through that it extends to being a sustainable motor for peace.

I personally thrive in traveling, connecting with local people, listening, sharing and experiencing art in its multidisciplinary facets.

The mobility support from Next Stage project has provided me the possibility to visit various festivals, contexts and meet with fellow producers, programmers and artists. Though it is by far not enough to enable meaningful intercultural sharing, listening and collaborations. Especially wealthy governments should be interested in keeping exchange sustainable. Chances of keeping societies connected and intercultural exchange alive are missed, when mobility is reduced.

My investment in visiting festivals, learning about local contexts, working realities and topics as well as getting to know artists and spaces is motivated by a deep curiosity to listen and understand. This provides me with invaluable knowledge to counsel festivals in Europe as well as promote artists I encounter and thus facilitate new connections and perspectives.

The most relevant encounters I had were outside of Europe, for example in the SWANA region and specifically in Damascus, Syria. The country and thus the rich arts scene had been cut off from freedom of expression and from the world, especially for the last decade. It might leave artists to develop unique languages within their possibilities, while at the same time they are hungry for exchange and input. On the one hand to keep up with what is happening around them and on the other hand to put their own notion to references and enrich transnational culture. Here art also shows its healing power for traumatised individuals and a society that has lived through repression for decades.

I perceive myself increasingly as a connector. This derives from the wish to leave subconscious postcolonial habits behind and develop a praxis of active listening and looking for individual needs. Even though eurocentrism and lack of representation

are widely discussed in Europe, clear actions to overcome these are lacking.

International mobility is under scrutiny, also from very necessary environmental questions to reduce our carbon footprint. Airplanes provide a relatively accessible and very fast mode of traveling which can be replaced by eco-friendly trains in most of Western Europe. Though outside of this region, trains and sometimes even buses are not a reality or not safe, which leaves airplanes to be the only vehicle to connect interregional and international.

The commercial sector of e.g. Cirque du Soleil, or big music artists have hundreds of people and equipment traveling throughout the year. Here I vote for putting into perspective the ecological impact of such world tours and the mobility of individual artists. The immediate audience of a Dua Lipa concert is of course not to compare with a theatre performance in any city, though I believe that live arts have a ripple effect in a society, their values being passed on and shared in communities – and this more sustainably through direct in-person experiences.

These small local connections, between neighbours, shop owners and mothers – when approached with a global perspective enforce these ripple effects with a lasting impact. China is spreading soft power worldwide through its Road and Belt initiative, building on the legacy of the ancient Silk Road. It is culture that has the power to separate though its foremost strength is to unite, connect, raise awareness and benefit from the universal power of togetherness.

Traveling stays a privilege of class and passport. Though executed outside of pure tourism, everyone benefits in the long term. The communities I visit as well as the communities I come from profit from my resources, knowledge sharing, new perspectives, references and understanding.

In our globalised world it is not an option with a future anymore to close off and focus on the national. After decades of fostering transnational projects, now wars and funding cuts make governments look increasingly local. This nullifies the gained connections and resembles a reset in cultural policy that will be difficult to regain. It always needs a balance, though focusing only on the national again will fuel and is already fuelling fascist tendencies.



WHERE THE CITY TAKES THE STAGE

REVIVING AMALIA, REVIVING THE CITY

BY KYRIAKOS CHRISTODOULOPOULOS, YOUNG CREATIVE AT TOOFAREAST, ATHENS

To describe the course of programming in relation to the *reopening of a theater*, one must first mention and focus on the *initial goal*.



The Goal, as an Artist and Co-Curator:

The main goal of the team—and also my own—was to provide, through Amalia, a

space and professional working conditions for experimental, daring, and young artists of the city.

Both Nikos and I felt the need to highlight artists—graduates of the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki's Theater Department** — who, without Amalia, would have been forced to **migrate**, along with their work, either to Athens or abroad. The result? The artistic and creative stagnation of Thessaloniki would have worsened.



:Opening of Amalia Theatre



:Photos of me performing on Amalia's Theatre Stage

At the same time, another goal set from the very beginning concerned the theater's **outward orientation**. Within this outward orientation was included the theater's engagement with larger organizations and artists in the city. The aim was—and has so far been achieved—to

combine the city's "self-organized" theater scene with major, well-established institutions or independent theaters that have made a significant mark in Thessaloniki.

More specifically, from its very first performances, Amalia managed to integrate into its artistic team actors working for the National Theater of Northern Greece (e.g., *We Are All Things* by Korina Vasileiadou), while also including in its program performances that were successful with audiences, such as diploma projects of theater school graduates (e.g., *Ntrim* by Ariadni Zoupina).

The way mobilities built the vision:

The achievement of the above goals — in the short period of the theater's operation — was facilitated, of course, by the team's contacts with **international festivals**.

Personally, through the knowledge I gained from Nikos, as well as my own brief experience with the Freedom Festival, I realized the audience's and curators' need for bold and experimental art that speaks to the present and to reality. Moreover, this type of performative art — not only personally appeals to me, which is why I decided to participate as a member of the **Freedom Festival** delegation — but is also largely absent from Thessaloniki. During my studies, discussing with classmates and peers, we were all searching

for venues where performances would concern us — our experiences — and humanity, reflecting both the present and timeless themes.

A theater that affirms in the present the "ancient" phrase of the great Peter Brook: **"We go to the theater to see who we are and how we live with others."** Not a theater that refers to a closed circle, detached from social reality, staging sterile works devoid of genuine relevance.



:Stage of Amalia Theatre

PROGRAMING TOOLS :

Thus, based on the above principles:

- Engagement with experimental, student theater
 - Emphasis on (young) local artists
 - Combination of these with major institutions and at a European level
 - Recognition of the city's and audience's needs for theater rooted in reality
- ...the main needs and the **"framework"** of the artistic program emerge.

Amalia, as a **historic theater—having long housed experimental art** — had secured the support of important figures and institutions in the city through its past activities (e.g., *Efi Stamouli, actress and emeritus lecturer of the theater department, among others*). This support continues to this day.

The method through which these characteristics were realized in the theater's reopening is now well established:

We watch performances, write reports, and discuss whether these performances meet the aforementioned characteristics, and from there it becomes a matter of production.

But everything begins with this: my engagement with the **city's theater and its needs**.

PRODUCTION WORK IN TRANSITION - POETICS OF LABOR MOBILITY

BY JÉSSICA NAKAZIMA, YOUNG CREATIVE AT NEDELCO & HAUSER, DUSSELDORF

Hi, Robot! The Mensch Maschine Festival was the first project where Jessica joined our production team. And perhaps it wasn't a coincidence that this event was dedicated to visions of the future, to exploring how different perspectives can meet in collaboration toward a more equitable, diverse, and progressive world. At that time, Jessica had just moved from Brazil to Germany. After building a successful career as a creative producer, acting as a catalyst for arts events such as the Panorama Festival for Performing Arts or the Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival, and contributing to major events like the 2016 Summer Olympics and Paralympics, she was ready to take on the challenge of starting anew in another country.

And she took the plunge!

The *Next Stage* project provided us with a framework for a shared learning experience. While engaging with many different shareholders in the frames of the artistic projects we delivered, we also got the chance to know each other better and understand our individual journeys.

Labor mobility, geographical as well as occupational, remains a challenge faced by many artists and cultural professionals in today's dynamic, globalized world, and it never gets any easier. This is a conversation with Jessica about the ups and downs of a new beginning.

1. What helps you feel at home?

Cooking Brazilian food and sharing it with friends, warmth always finds its way through the table.

2. What's a habit from Brazil you still keep?

Smiling and being kind to everyone involved in the projects I work on, seeing people as people, not only as their roles. People with stories, fears, mistakes, and many other layers.

3. One opportunity that came from moving countries?

Gaining distance to look at my career, my culture, and my working practices, to understand their true value. I learned that every word requires a shared meaning, and that empathy begins with the effort to truly understand the other.

4. What do you wish you had known about Germany's arts scene earlier?

That it's a closed market, where persistence is essential, and for producers, speaking German makes a real difference. You'll hear many "no's" before the first "yes," and you must learn not to lose your strength along the way.

5. What have you learned about yourself through this move?

To value my roots and stay true to my needs and beliefs

6. What moment recently made you feel you belong?

Being heard. Taking part in a project I followed from the start, speaking as an equal, and helping build, together with my colleagues, a healthy, dynamic work environment.

7. What's something you used to fear but don't anymore?

Starting over.
One skill that helps you adapt fast?
Listening deeply before acting.

8. How do you stay connected? / What keeps you grounded?

My dog, long walks, and the ocean — even if it's just in my mind.

9. The first thing you did to rebuild your career after moving?

Volunteered and joined projects that aligned with my values.

10. Where did you find support?

Among other migrants and cultural workers, people navigating similar in-betweens.

11. Your go-to for self-care on the move?

Breath, yoga, Cooking, silence, and music.

12. One mindset that keeps you going globally?

There's always a possibility for cooperation, you just need to look a little closer. Empathy and the will to lower barriers are essential to building bridges.

A passage from a Brazilian author that I feel deeply resonates with this process.

"Even cutting your own flaws can be dangerous. You never know which one is the flaw that sustains your whole structure."

— Clarice Lispector, *"A Hora da Estrela" (The Hour of the Star)*, 1977

”



BALANCING THE DUAL ROLES OF ARTIST AND ARTS MANAGER

BY LILI STERN, YOUNG CREATIVE AT WORKSHOP FOUNDATION, BUDAPEST

*I am a Hungarian choreographer, performer since 2016 and a theater pedagogue, and emerging arts manager. The past few years have been a challenging yet deeply transformative journey as I've learned to navigate the delicate balance between being an artist and an arts manager. This dual path was a deliberate choice: one born out of both necessity and aspiration. The contemporary dance scene in my home country, Hungary, has long struggled with limited resources, **minimal financial support**, and a **general lack of public interest**.*

*Over the past two years, I've managed to earn about **90% of my income through arts management roles**, primarily with Next Stage and Workshop Foundation. This stability has, in turn, enabled me to sustain my practice as an artist. Yet, achieving this balance has not come easily. It involves a significant amount of **invisible labor**, **intense time management**, and countless hours of unpaid work devoted to artistic creation.*

AS AN ARTS MANAGER:

On one hand, becoming increasingly visible as an arts manager has **opened new pathways for connection and collaboration** within the artistic community. This role has allowed me to engage with my peers and colleagues from a different perspective – **one rooted in support, facilitation, and shared growth rather than competition**.

Through my work in management, I have developed richer, more insightful dialogues with artists, curators, and cultural workers. These **conversations** often go beyond the surface of creative production, delving into the complexities of our field, the struggles we face, and the **evolving role of dance and performance in contemporary society**. I have become more curious, more courageous in asking difficult questions, and more willing to engage in meaningful discussions about artistic value, sustainability, and community.

Occupying the dual perspective of both artist and manager has given me a broader understanding of artistic processes. As a manager, I am able to observe and support these processes from a structural and logistical viewpoint, one that complements, rather than conflicts with, my creative identity. **This duality continues to shape the way I see the arts ecosystem, reminding me that both creation and facilitation are vital forms of artistry in themselves.**

AS AN ARTIST:

As I become increasingly conscious of how I communicate about my work and present myself as an artist, I have developed a clearer understanding of how to define my practice and articulate what truly drives me.

This growing awareness extends not only to the content of my artistic work but also to the way I position and share it with others. I now find myself more actively engaged in the processes of “selling” and communicating my work, carefully considering how, when, why, and to whom I speak about it.

At the same time, this heightened self-awareness comes with its own challenges. **I often feel an underlying pressure to align my artistic interests with the themes and topics currently favored by funding bodies or institutional agendas.** This awareness of what is considered “relevant” or “fundable” inevitably influences my decision-making and, at times, places subtle limits on my creative freedom. Balancing the authenticity of my artistic voice with the practical realities of sustainability in today’s cultural landscape is an ongoing negotiation.

“Learning to communicate my work is not only about visibility or promotion, it has become an integral part of my artistic practice itself.”

Despite the above-mentioned tensions, this process has made me more intentional and strategic. It pushes me to reflect deeply on the purpose behind my artistic choices and to find ways to maintain integrity while navigating external expectations.

Navigating between these two roles has been challenging, yet highly complementary to my work. Being engaged on both sides has deepened my understanding of the essence of creation, collaboration, and the conscious application of our field. I believe that these perspectives and insights provide support not only to my colleagues but also to myself.

THE COURAGE TO BEGIN: WHAT YOUNG ARTISTS NEED MOST

BY ONCA GUADARRAMA, YOUNG CREATIVE AT NEDELCO & HAUSER, DUSSELDORF

As a dance student, I not only reflect on my abilities as an artist, but also sometimes doubt my place within this fast-moving, often precarious world of art and culture. It is funny, isn't it? There are institutions that proudly claim to "train artists" (but can art truly be taught?), and yet one of the most essential aspects of being an artist "self-management, self-promotion, self-sustainability" remains largely unaddressed.

Perhaps it is part of every artist's journey to wrestle with self-doubt, rejected grants, and unsuccessful auditions. Surely that struggle shapes you, hardens you, and sometimes distorts you. But in my case, it mostly intimidated me. It dimmed the spark that had once drawn me toward this unpredictable universe we call art.

By chance, I found myself among a group of young creatives who believed wholeheartedly in *learning by doing*. At first, I felt utterly unqualified for the role. But soon, I realized two things: first, that the basics of management should be woven into every dance curriculum; and second, that learning from shared experience can sometimes be far more transformative than any lecture hall could offer.

When we come together, producers, managers, and artists alike, it is not to fix a single path forward, but to exchange stories, perspectives, and lessons, and to grow through that exchange. I was guided, gently, but with purpose, and I learned by doing.

As a production assistant, I became part of the living machinery behind a performance. Through constant dialogue with the Next Stage team and the Young Creatives, I found both guidance and a sense of belonging. And suddenly, the idea of stepping into this performing art world no longer felt unattainable. It also changed how I see art itself. I began to understand that the artistic process extends far

beyond what unfolds on stage. Who shapes these processes? How do funding structures, budget cuts, trends, and criticism mold what ultimately appears before an audience? And how much do I bend to external forces just to be heard within this system?

The candid yet caring exchanges with my colleagues have helped me find a more grounded perspective. They remind me to remain critical, not only toward myself, but toward the structures that define our artistic realities. Many emerging artists I meet share a similar experience, their critical thinking often turns inward, becoming self-doubt. Of course, that inner critique is part of the process, but it should not obscure the larger picture. We must also question the systems we inhabit. And when that questioning finds resonance, when it sparks change, it becomes a form of artistic empowerment.

On a personal note, this journey inspired me to take part in founding a student council at our university, to create a platform for self-governance and student advocacy. It is a small step, but one that allows critique to become action.

So what do I think, how does one manage oneself as an artist?
How do you navigate the uncertain terrain of the professional world?

Know your values and understand why you or your work might matter to others.
Be persistent, even if it means asking the same question three times.
Give yourself time.
Ask for help, others have stood where you stand.
Stay critical, but true to yourself.

And above all:
have the courage to make mistakes.



Young Creatives Knowledge Pool

A PDF publication created by the participants of the Young Creatives Incubation Program's Knowledge Sharing module (Next Stage Project, Creative Europe).

This document brings together first-hand insights from emerging producers and managers working across Europe's independent performing arts scene. Drawing on their experiences within the Young Creatives Incubation Program, the contributors explore key aspects of international management — such as production workflows, marketing and communication strategies, programming models, guest management, and the balance between artistic and administrative practice.

Each chapter reflects the author's personal context and specialization, offering grounded perspectives on how local realities, cultural structures, and professional practices intersect in the broader European landscape. Together, these texts form a living archive of practical knowledge — a resource for peers, mentors, and future producers navigating the complexities of international collaboration in the performing arts.

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Prepared by:

**Brigitta Kovács/ Workshop Foundation; Nikos Mavrakis/
TooFarEast, Mara Nedelcu/ Nedelcu & Hauser**

With contributions of Next Stage Project's Young Creatives:

**Kyriakos Christodouloupoulos, Annegret Debitz, Onca Guadarrama,
Aristidis KREATSOULAS, Eszter Lovrity, Jéssica Nakazima, Lili Stern, Tammo Walter**

Designed by:

Annamária Payer

Contact:

nextstageproject.com



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