

**FABULAMUNDI WORKBOOK:****Contemporary Playwriting and Theatre Translation Cultures in Europe  
A Report on Current Systems, Conventions and Perceptions**

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**Abstract:**

Commissioned by the EU-funded project, [Fabulamundi: Playwriting Europe Beyond Borders](#), this report assesses current practices, perceptions and norms in the field of contemporary playwriting and the translation of contemporary plays in nine different European countries: Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and the U.K. Mapping different national ecologies, structures and traditions enabling the production and mobility of plays through the use of questionnaires and one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders in each context, the report presents qualitative and quantitative data gathered on how each theatre culture supports living dramatists, how it organises its education system, what conventions drive the production and translation of contemporary plays, and what perceptions are held by gatekeepers, theatre-makers and other cultural operators about the theatre system in which they work. Drawing on the existing network of partners, venues, playwrights, translators, directors and performers working with the Fabulamundi network, I evaluate and compare cultural practices and institutional habits in the field, and conclude with a list of best practices for a sustainable field.

**Introduction**

The complex and historically layered ecologies of contemporary European theatre practices—shaped by such factors as economic and social conditions, ideological discourses, taste and other professional conventions—have informed local performance cultures abiding by very different written and non-written rules. While a large number of academic research within Theatre Studies have focused on national contexts within Europe, there is little research being carried out in English that programmatically approaches contemporary continental practices from a supranational perspective (see European-wide studies such as Delgado, Lease and Rebellato, eds, 2020; Delgado and Rebellato, 2010 (2020); Ridout and Kelleher, 2007). There is also very little qualitative research being undertaken—at least in English—around theatre practices, and even less qualitative research that aims to compare theatre cultures and traditions in Europe. Moreover, to my knowledge, an assessment of different attitudes towards, and approaches to, the translation of plays in Europe has never been attempted. As a result, resources for those wishing to navigate theatre systems across European borders are few and far between.

The present report addresses a gap in research by focusing on contemporary playwriting and the staging of contemporary plays in their original language or in translation in Europe, taking nine countries as case studies. For the purposes of this study, I define contemporary playwriting as inclusive of both plays by living authors and plays written in the past 20-30 years. However, the focus has been on the systems and practical conventions that shape the careers of living theatre writers in each country. Driven by the desire to map and evaluate

different structures and norms in support of intercultural understanding, exchange and cooperation, the report is both aimed at, and draws from the expertise of, scholars, critics, theatre-makers, translators, *dramaturgs*, literary managers and producers based in these countries.

This report was commissioned by the Creative Europe-funded large-scale international cooperation project, “[Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe: Beyond Borders?](#)” (2017–2020), a network of European organisations supporting living playwrights and promoting the circulation of their work across European languages through a mobility programme for writers, a series of events and networking opportunities, as well as speculative translations, readings, workshops and full-blown productions. Led by Claudia di Giacomo of [PAV](#), a performing arts production company based in Rome, the network includes thirteen [core partners](#) in nine countries which contributed to the project budget (Wiener Worstaetten in Austria; Theatre Letí in the Czech Republic; La Mousson d’Été and Théâtre Ouvert in France; the Interkulturelles Theater Zentrum in Germany; Teatro i, Short Theatre, and PAV in Italy; Teatr Dramatyczny in Poland; Teatrul Odeon and the University of Târgu-Mureş in Romania; Sala Beckett in Spain; and the Gate Theatre in the U.K.). I want to acknowledge the crucial support of my commissioners and the generosity of those who offered their time and expertise to the project. I also want to thank the project’s Research Assistant, Lianna Mark, for her work on data gathering.

The present report, nicknamed “Fabulamundi Workbook,” was conceived to empower Europe-based playwrights, playwriting institutions and organizations with concrete knowledge gathered from experts in playwriting and theatre translation practice in order to learn about and from one another. In this report, my aim is to present a comparative evaluation of qualitative and quantitative findings for every country. More analysis of this data will appear in my upcoming monograph for Routledge, due to be published in late 2021.

### **Structure of the Report and Research Questions**

This report is mainly based on qualitative data, that is, on the knowledge, perceptions and opinions offered by the experts who took part in this study. Despite our efforts to be representative and speaking to a variety of different voices, the findings on each country should be taken as a snapshot of what the experts we talked to have shared, rather than as statistically representative data.

This study is structured around eight national reports: one for each country, with Austria and Germany in a single report. Each national report features three key areas:

1. **Key players.** We asked our respondents to name the most prestigious and influential venues and festivals working in their country to offer a map of their perceptions. For lack of space, we have had to limit the number of institutions we can present in this report to the few most consistently mentioned.
2. **Systems and practical conventions.** My hypothesis is that what I call a “contemporary playwriting and theatre translation culture” is constituted by a system of interconnected practices in the theatre industry, as well as in arts funding, gatekeeping structures, education, press, publishing, audience interest/taste, and so on. Conventions and norms in each of these areas will have an effect on other areas of the system.
3. **The last section included in this report is advice for foreign playwrights.** Respondents provided short but specific advice for foreign playwrights wishing to have their plays staged in that country. The most useful suggestions have been included.

## Methodology

The project employed research methods borrowed from sociology and theoretical underpinnings from theatre studies, as well as practical knowledge of theatre-making, playwriting and theatre translation. Each survey respondent and interviewee who took part in the study gave us informed consent to quote their words anonymously. This study's design was approved by the University of Kent's Ethics Committee on 16 November 2019 (Ref: 0221920).

The research process was carried out in stages as follows:

- January 2020. Questionnaires. An internet-based survey consisting of around sixty questions was devised to gather an initial set of mixed qualitative and quantitative data. Respondents included playwrights, directors, actors, translators, artistic directors, critics, academics and other roles in each country. An average of 22 responses per country were received.
- February 2020. Interim national reports. Once the online questionnaires were returned, interim reports for each country were compiled with information gathered from respondents. The interim reports were shared with Fabulamundi partners and updated with their written and verbal feedback.
- March 2020. Follow-up semi-structured interviews. The updated interim reports were shared with three to four additional experts per country (literary managers, playwrights, directors, critics, translators and so on), who were recruited via partners' networks and through my own network. I carried out semi-structured interviews with experts over phone or video conferencing during the lockdown stage of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. The interim reports were edited again following conversations with these experts.
- April 2020. Additional interviews. Additional qualitative interviews on key project research questions were carried out via video conferencing with a selection of writers (one for each country) by the project's Research Assistant, Lianna Mark.
- May-June 2020. Final national reports. A final version of the reports was redrafted to incorporate more qualitative and quantitative data and include complexity through quotations of interviewees' anonymised comments.
- June-July 2020. Peer review of Fabulamundi Workbook. The revised national reports were edited down to half their length into "national summaries," published below, and collated into a single paper nicknamed Fabulamundi Workbook. The Workbook was sent out to three academic peer reviewers specialising in European theatre, and to in-house editors at *Critical Stages*. Their feedback informed final revisions. The qualitative data and evidence upon which the below national summaries are based is mostly unpublished and will not be shared with third parties in order to comply with privacy and data protection regulation.

## Executive Summary

This study compared systems, conventions and perceptions around contemporary playwriting and theatre translation in Austria and Germany; Czech Republic; France; Italy; Poland; Romania; Spain; the U.K. The study's key findings can be summarised as follows:

1. **Confidence that contemporary plays in the local language(s) are valued.** The country with the highest levels of confidence that venues, theatre-makers and audiences value new plays written in the local language is the U.K., followed by Spain and Poland. The country with the lowest confidence is Romania, followed by Italy and Austria. Confidence was measured via a combination of two survey questions, which asked experts in each country to evaluate whether venues “regularly” programme contemporary plays in the local language, and whether theatre-makers and audiences are “interested” in contemporary plays.
2. **Confidence that contemporary plays in translation are valued.** The country with the highest confidence that venues, theatre-makers and audiences value new plays in translation is Spain, followed by Romania and Poland. The country with the lowest confidence is Austria, followed by the U.K. and Italy. This was measured via a combination of two survey questions, which asked experts in each country to evaluate whether venues “regularly” programme contemporary plays in translation, and whether theatre-makers and audiences are “interested” in contemporary plays in translation.
3. **Playwrights’ income.** It was difficult to establish a meaningful comparison between playwright fee levels because of the differences in commissioning and licencing practices. However, taking into account both commissioning fees (where these are customary), fees offered for existing plays (where these are offered) and copyright percentages, we found that the countries where playwrights can hope to earn more from writing plays were the U.K. and Germany, followed at some distance by Spain and France. The country where playwrights’ earnings are lowest is Romania, followed by the Czech Republic and Poland. In some countries, however, like Poland, Romania, Spain and Italy, it is common for a playwright to receive no advance fee for writing a play that is put on stage, and only be paid through a percentage of gross box office intake when the play is staged. This practice is unsustainable because it forces playwrights to either take on major financial risks, or give up.
4. **Translators’ income.** It is difficult to establish a meaningful comparison between theatre translator fee levels in each country because these vary widely even within the same country. In general, taking into account fee levels and copyright percentages, Germany and the U.K. tend to be where translators can hope to earn the most, even though in the U.K. there is a lack of opportunity for translators. The country with the lowest translator fees is Romania, followed by the Czech Republic, Poland and Italy.
5. **Distinctive traditions.** Contemporary playwriting and theatre translation cultures in Europe are characterised by distinctive traditions that inform practices, perceptions and value systems. Below are some of the key aspects that inform conventions in the field:
  - **Playwriting as a distinct subject in HE/Drama schools.** In many countries, playwriting or writing for performance is taught as a distinct subject in Universities or Drama schools (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, U.K.). In

others, dramaturgy, devising and directing are taught in ways that engage with text production and editing, but the art of writing plays itself can only be learned in informal settings or is considered a skill that can be acquired independently by writers (Czech Republic, Poland, Romania).

- **Playwrights learning alongside actors.** Some training contexts tend to assume that writers, directors and actors need to learn the foundations of theatre practice together and then specialise in writing for the stage (Italy, Spain, France). Other traditions tend to expect writers to only learn alongside other writers (Austria, Germany). The U.K. offers both options.
- **Dramaturgy/literary departments.** Countries can be split between those that rely on the expertise of dramaturgs and literary managers—employed by venues or companies—and those that do not envisage this particular position. Even if many differences exist between the traditional German notion of *Dramaturg* (who is considered part of the artistic team, and who is often a playwright too) and the traditional British figure of the Literary Manager (who considered part of the management team, and who is seldom a writer), the big dividing line is between those countries that conceive of such an intermediary role between the artistic directorship and playwrights (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, U.K.), and those that function mostly without such a role (France, Italy, Romania, Spain).
- **Commissioning.** The concept of “commissioning” is understood differently across Europe. Broadly speaking, in most countries where dramaturgy/literary departments exist, venues have a solid tradition of approaching writers to request that they write new plays specifically for them for a fee, effectively trusting the writer on the basis of their track record and accepting a degree of risk (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, U.K.). In others, venues/companies do not—or cannot afford to—invest in commissions and tend to only consider plays that have already been written (France, Spain, Italy, Poland, Romania), which they do not have to pay to acquire.
- **Repertoires and ensembles.** State-run theatres in Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Poland tend to employ ensembles of actors on a full-time, ongoing basis and programme plays on a repertoire-style rota (that is, the same play will be on once every 2-4 weeks for several months or years, depending on demand). All other countries employ actors on a freelance basis and programme plays in single-block runs of varying length, from a few days to several weeks, months or years. This practice influences the kinds of plays that are staged and the support/feedback the playwright receives in the development process.
- **Literary agencies and agents.** The most significant divide we identified in this field is between those countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, U.K.) where playwrights tend to be represented by commercial agents, literary agencies or publishers—albeit with different working methods and remits—and those countries where playwrights are expected to promote their own work and negotiate contracts themselves, or where only a few commercial literary agencies exist (France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain).

- **Exchange with other media.** Countries were split between those in which dramatists generally also write for other media, such as radio, TV and film (Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Spain and the UK), and those in which this exchange was not frequent (France, Italy, Poland, Romania). Many countries reported a sense of mistrust from professionals in commercial media, such as TV and film, towards theatre writers, who tend to work in the subsidised sector.
- **Press coverage.** While coverage of contemporary theatre in the printed press is perceived to be in decline in every country we surveyed, web-based criticism is generally an area of growth. Specialised theatre press that covers new plays exists in every country. The most significant difference we encountered is whether experts perceived that national newspapers take an interest in contemporary playwrights and their craft, or not. Experts in Austria, Germany, Spain and the U.K. reported that at least some national newspapers do cover contemporary playwriting, while most experts in other countries lamented the lack of coverage in national printed press.
- **Publishing.** Approaches around publishing play scripts vary widely. In most countries, the majority of new plays are never published as books because of a lack of play script reading market (Romania, Czech Republic, Poland, Spain, Italy), while in other countries (Austria and Germany), publishing plays is simply not part of national conventions. In the U.K., only plays that are staged can be considered for publication, but only those that are deemed financially viable are marketed as books. In France, where the publishing industry is subsidised by the state, new plays are considered for publication by specialist publishers independently of their staging history.

Overall, the combination of these distinctive traditions, systems and perceptions shapes the field of contemporary playwriting and theatre translation in every region and country. Areas of practice that have not been investigated in this report, but would deserve further research, include: theatre and playwriting in primary and secondary education; audience development activities; relationships between subsidised and commercial theatre sectors; stage aesthetics and taste; and attitudes in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion of a broad variety of voices. These issues will be further investigated in my upcoming monograph.

## National Summaries

### Austria and Germany

Austria and Germany are discussed here in a single report because theatre cultures in these two countries share important networks and systems, display similarities in attitudes and tastes, work with comparable conventions, and the German and Austrian languages are entirely intelligible to one another. This makes the circulation of texts and productions easy and commonplace, though some cultural differences persist. Both countries enjoy a solid and supportive contemporary playwriting culture against the backdrop of extremely well-funded state venues that routinely work with living playwrights writing in German and in other languages. However, in general we found that our Austrian experts tended to be less confident about the state of their contemporary playwriting and theatre translation culture than our German interlocutors.

Our experts affirmed that in both countries, there has been a surge of interest in new plays in the past 10-20 years. The vast majority of respondents—93% in Germany, 90% in Austria—were confident that most theatres in both countries “regularly” or “sometimes” programme contemporary plays. Around 70% of respondents in Germany affirmed that “most” or “some” audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays written in German, while in Austria this figure dropped to 60%. With regard to contemporary plays in translation, the responses differ: in Germany, 60% of respondents thought that “most” or “some” audiences and makers are interested in contemporary foreign plays; in Austria, only 30% of respondents affirmed that “some” are interested, which amounts to a marked difference between the two countries, however we only had 10 responses from Austria so any single response makes a big difference. In response to this result, one expert commented: “I actually think that the interest is nearly as high as in Germany”.



**Fig 1.** Elisabeth Findeis and Burak Uzuncimen in *Gegen die Freiheit* (Original title: *Contre la llibertat*; English: *Against Freedom*) by Esteve Soler. Trans. from Catalan Birgit Weilguny. Dir. Hans Escher. Dramaturgy Bernhard Studlar. Produced by Wiener Worstaetten and Werk X Theater. Werk X, Vienna, November 2019. Photo Joachim Kern © Fabulamundi

## 1. Key players

**Austria.** Austrian theatres that programme new plays by local living authors are located in the capital and in a few other big cities. Some of the main venues for contemporary playwriting are the Schauspielhaus Wien, the Theater in der Josefstadt, the Volkstheater Wien, the Werk-X, the Wiener Wortstaetten, the Theater Nestroyhof/Hamakon, the Kosmos Theater, Dschungel Wien (Theater for young audiences) and above all the Austrian National Theatre/Burgtheater in Vienna; the Schauspielhaus Graz; the Landestheater and the Theater Phönix Linz; the Theater Kosmos Bregenz; and the Schauspielhaus Salzburg. Festivals include the Hin & Weg Theaterfestival, the DramatikerInnenfestival in Graz and the Wiener Festwochen.

**Germany.** In Germany, virtually every city has a state-funded theatre which programmes new plays—though some respondents suggest this is more systematically the case in Berlin. However, contemporary playwriting is not well represented German independent venues because these are spaces traditionally dedicated to theatrical “research and innovation,” and playwriting is not perceived as “innovative” enough. As a result, independent venues programme more collective devising and/or director-driven productions. It is beyond the scope of this report to list every theatre in Germany that programmes new plays, but below are some key players.

The main venues for contemporary playwriting in **Berlin** are the Deutsches Theater, the Schaubühne, the Maxim Gorki Theater, the Berliner Ensemble, the Volksbühne and the Sophiensäle. Some of the independent venues in Berlin also play a relatively important role in this field, such as the Interkulturelle Theaterzentrum (ITZ), the Theaterdiscounter, the Theater an der Parkaue, the TAK (Theater Aufbau Kreuzberg), and the Ballhaus Ost.

In **other large German cities**, state-funded theatres that support playwriting include: Schauspiel Köln in Cologne; the Schauspiel Frankfurt; the Thalia Theater and the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg; the Nationaltheater and the Theaterhaus G7 in Mannheim; the Theater Rampe and the Staatsschauspiel in Stuttgart; the Theater Bonn; Theater Osnabrück; Theater Heidelberg; the Schauspiele in Leipzig Düsseldorf and Dresden; the Kammerspiele and the Residenztheater in Munich; and the Staatstheater Nürnberg.

**Festivals.** Festivals in Berlin include the Berliner Theatertreffen (the Berliner Stückemarkt section in particular), FIND at the Schaubühne, Autorentheatertage at the Deutsches Theater and 100 Grad Festival. In Heidelberg, the Heidelberger Stückemarkt; in Mülheim, the Mülheimer Theatertage and Impulse Theatre Festival (also in Düsseldorf and Cologne); the Spielart Theaterfestival in Munich; the at.tension in Lärz; the Greizer Theaterherbst in Greiz.

[Fig. 2]



**Fig 2.** Werner Waas and Lea Barletti in *Stilleben mit Schauspielern* (Original title: *Natura morta con attori*; English: *Still Life with Actors*) by Fabrizio Sinisi. Trans. from Italian Werner Waas. Dir. Barletti/Waas. Produced by Interkulturellen Theaterzentrum in collaboration with Barletti/Waas theatre company. Haus der Statistik am Alexanderplatz, Berlin, June 2019. Photo Paolo Costantini © Fabulamundi. Watch a video extract here (in German and Italian): <https://vimeo.com/370260572>

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

### 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**Initiating a production.** Theatres in both countries have a solid habit of commissioning plays from authors but will also consider plays that are already written. Respondents affirmed that both in Austria and in Germany new productions tend to result from commissions made directly by venues, directors, or companies. Often, these commissions are a result of agents/publishers pitching new plays to relevant venues, which then result in commissions from these venues. When a play in translation is staged, on the other hand, the process can be initiated by a publisher/agent representing a foreign playwright, a translator that knows a source text or a director that knows the foreign text.

**Playwright fees.** The most established playwrights can sustain themselves through playwrighting alone, but most also have another job. Playwrights in both countries tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee and box office percentage (between 10% and 14% of gross box office for authors depending on the size and reputation of the theatre). In both countries, a typical new play commission/premiere will be paid between €3.000 and €20.000 depending on the status of the playwright and the venue. New play development is overwhelmingly funded with public money, through either state arts funding or city/regional arts funding (the latter is prevalent in Germany, due to the federal structure of funding

streams). Funding opportunities for the development of new plays in Germany are provided through commissions by many theatres and theatre festivals (see those mentioned above). Other institutions sponsoring play development are the Deutscher Literaturfonds, and the Heinz und Heide Dürr Stiftung. In Austria, play development is funded by Literar Mechana, the Wiener Wortstätten, UniT Graz and through the state and regional arts council's stipends and grants.

**Translator fees.** Translations can be commissioned by venues or by publishers, acting as agencies. Translators are paid either a flat fee only (between €500 and €2,000 depending on the venue, the production budget and the playwright) or a flat fee and a percentage of box office income. If the translation is funded by the publisher/agency, they retain a share of copyright. Generally, if there is a translation, the split is 7.7% for the author and 2.8% for the translator, but percentages vary if the agency is also involved.

**Funding for translations.** Respondents in Austria were unaware of funding streams specifically targeting the translation of new plays. Conversely, most respondents in Germany were familiar with translation-specific funding streams and cited the following examples alongside Fabulamundi: the Deutscher Übersetzerfonds and Literaturfonds, the Goethe Institut and other cultural institutes, publishing houses (Rowohlt, Suhrkamp, Fischer), theatres (when interested in producing a play), state-funded grants, awards and stipend programmes (that is Bundesland-specific “Übersetzerstipendien”), and other organisations such as the Projektförderung Literatur Berlin, the Arbeitsstipendium Literatur Berlin, the Kinder- und Jugendtheaterzentrum (KJTZ), the Internationales Theaterinstitut (ITI), the Berliner Übersetzerwerkstatt and the European Theatre Convention (ETC). Drama Panorama is a network of theatre translators, but does not provide funding.

**Length of run and tours.** German and Austrian state-run theatres tend to employ a permanent ensemble of actors and present work on a repertory basis, whereby a production may be on once or twice a week for several years. As a result, plays by contemporary playwrights do not tend to tour after opening in the producing venue, although some touring happens nationally around specific festivals, rather than venues, and the most prestigious ensembles can tour internationally. German and Austrian independent theatre productions of new plays do not tour very often, but they sometimes tour to the Impulse Theater Festival, which is held every year in the Rhine-Westphalia region, in Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Mülheim an der Rhein.

**Exchanges with other media.** Respondents affirmed many playwrights also write for film and TV both countries, and that contemporary plays are “sometimes” programmed on radios on Deutschland Radio Kultur. An expert argued that, in Germany, “in comparison with theatre productions, playwrights can sometimes earn more for a radio commission than for a theatre one, but fewer broadcasts in total are aired than productions performed.” Radio plays are broadcast less often in Austria, for instance on Ö1 Kulturradio, and playwrights “sometimes” also write for TV, film.

[Fig. 3]



**Fig 3.** *Gegen die Freiheit* (Original title: *Contre la llibertat*; English: *Against Freedom*) by Esteve Soler. Trans. from Catalan Birgit Weilguny. Dir. Hans Escher. Dramaturgy Bernhard Studlar. With Elisabeth Findeis, Saskia Klar, Burak Uzuncimen, Daniel Wagner, Heinz Weixelbraun. Produced by Wiener Worstaetten and Werk X Theater. Werk X, Vienna, November 2019. © Fabulamundi.

## 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Dramaturgie departments.** Most, if not all, state theatres in both countries have *Dramaturgie* departments, which are responsible for all matters of text selection and have a big role in advising the artistic direction department. They attend rehearsals and take part in conversations around aesthetics, acting, text editing and interpretation.

**Agents/publishers.** Playwrights in both countries are generally represented by agents, which correspond in fact to publishing houses, based principally in Germany for both the Austrian and the German theatre scene. These tend to be theatre-focused sub-sections of big German publishers such as Rowohlt, S. Fischer, Henschel, KiWi, and Suhrkamp; and theatre- and arts-focused publishing houses such Thomas Sessler Verlag and Kaiser in Vienna, henschel Schauspiel Berlin, Per H. LaU.K.e, Drei Masken, Verlag der Autoren, Felix Bloch Erben, and Schäfersphilippen Verlag. In Germany, agents/publishers are very frequently successful in promoting their writers with venues.

**Prizes and bursaries in Austria.** According to respondents in both countries, prizes, awards, bursaries and/or residencies are made available to local and foreign playwrights by a wide array of organisations. In Austria, prizes include the Retzhofer Dramapreis, the Nestroy-Preis, the Exil-DramatikerInnenpreis. Residencies and bursaries include the Hans-Gratzer-Stipendium, the Wiener Dramatik Stipendium the Peter-Turrini-Stipendium, the Preis der Theaterallianz, stipends offered by KulturKontakt Austria, Literar Mechana, the

Bundeskanzleramt Wien and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMU.K.K); as well as the “Stadtschreiber” stipends (both in Austria and Germany).

**Prizes and bursaries in Germany.** The most prestigious accolades include the Berlin Theatertreffen and Heidelberger Stückemarkt prizes, which are crucially open to foreign playwrights and have contributed to launching many European playwrights’ careers. Also worth mentioning are the Mülheimer Dramatikerpreis, the Kinder- und Jugendtheaterzentrum Preis, the Kleist-Förderpreis für junge Dramatik, the Jakob-Michael-Reinhold-Lenz-Preis der Stadt Jena and the Else-Lasker-Schüler-Dramatikerpreis. Bursaries are offered, among others, by organisations such as the Frankfurter Autorenstiftung, the Stuttgarter Schriftstellerhaus, the Akademie der Künste and the Stiftung Künstlerdorf Schöppingen.

### 2.3 Education, publishing and press

**Higher education and other training in Germany.** Many, if not most, aspiring playwrights in Germany study playwriting at the Berlin Universität der Künste (UdK), which offers the most prestigious course in the German-speaking world, the 4-year BA plus MA course in Creative Writing for the Stage. The course, which boasts a long list of celebrated alumni, concentrates on writing techniques, and no other theatre-related subject such as acting or directing are included in the curriculum. Playwriting can also be studied, but less specifically and as part of theatre practice, in German *Hochschulen* (conservatoire and drama schools) such as the Theaterakademie August Everding München; the Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf; the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch, the SRH Hochschule der populären Künste; and the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg or Felix Mendelsohn Leipzig. Other universities offer Theaterwissenschaft (Theatre Studies) courses that focus on the theory and history of theatre and often include contemporary playwriting, which is taught theoretically. Less formal contexts include the Neues Institut für dramatisches Schreiben, or NIDS (New Institute for Dramatic Writing) founded by playwrights Maxi Obexer and Sasha Marianna Salzmann in Berlin.

[Fig. 4]



**Fig 4.** Lea Barletti, *Hauser: Dramatische Republik: Meine Gedichte werden die Welt nicht verändern* (My poems won't change the world). Produced by ITZ, Berlin, in the streets of Neukölln © Lea Barletti

**Higher education and other training in Austria.** Respondents from Austria agree that playwrighting is studied mainly informally, but also at certain universities, especially the *Sprachkunst* (Language Arts) programme at the Universität für angewandte Kunst in Vienna—a creative writing course which includes dramatic writing—and UniT Graz's Dramaforum—a two-year selective course. Drama schools in Austria do not tend to offer playwrighting, but informal courses are held, for example, at the Wiener Wortstaetten, Leondinger Akademie für Literatur and during the Hin & Weg festival.

**Publishing.** Plays in both Germany and Austria are not often published as books. Instead, they are publicised within the industry as part of a publisher/agent's catalogue and sent to the *Dramaturgie* departments to be read and selected for production. Some theatre-focused magazines publish contemporary plays—for example *Theater der Zeit* and *Theater Heute* in Germany—the latter featuring an unpublished play in every issue. In Austria, literary magazines *Manuskripte* and *Lichtungen* sometimes publish plays.

**Press.** The vast majority of respondents in both countries affirmed that reviews or features about contemporary plays "regularly" or at least "sometimes" appear in the general press, such as national newspapers (in the *Feuilleton* or the *Kulturseite* sections of the most important newspapers, such as *Die Zeit*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Berliner Zeitung*, *Tageszeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel* and *Der Freitag* in Germany, and *Der Standard*, *Falter*, *Kurier*, *Kronenzeitung* and *Die Presse* in Austria). Contemporary plays

are “regularly” reviewed and discussed in theatre-focused publications in Germany and at least “sometimes” in Austria. Specialised Austrian magazines include *Die Bühne* and *Mottingers Meinung* (culture-focused) and local cultural magazines. Among the most important German magazines—relevant, however, both in Germany and Austria—are *Theater der Zeit*, *Theater Heute*, and *Das Theatermagazin*. *Nachtkritik* is the most important online platform for theatre in Austria, Germany and Switzerland working with a big network of correspondents.

### **3. Advice for foreign playwrights**

“Get involved in festivals in the Germanophone countries, where it is easier to meet people (especially international ones).”

“Have your play translated into German or English (if possible, by a good translator!), or write a multilingual play. Then, pitch your play to one director or dramaturg in particular, whose work you know and feel your play would resonate with. Explain to them why you think this is.”

“Get in touch with publishing houses and/or professional theatre translators who work closely with theatres” Dramaturgie departments.”

“Send your play (or a translation of it) to self-organised networks such as Drama Panorama and Eurodram, which connect playwrights with translators and professionals from different countries.”

## Czech Republic

Contemporary playwriting and theatre translation in the Czech Republic are characterised by established structures of support for writers, yet our interviewees reported contrasting opinions on levels of interest in new plays from commissioning theatres and audiences. The theatre scene in the Czech Republic includes state-run venues, which operate on a repertory system and employ an ensemble of actors, and the independent scene, which is subsidised but not state-run, and instead employs freelancers. Money is scarce in both, but state-run theatres operate a more sustainable business model because they enjoy relatively stable funding and can plan ahead. Contemporary plays are produced by both state-run and independent theatres.

Respondents were split between those who see the interest in new plays growing, and those who note that Czech audiences are still not very open to contemporary playwriting. Our survey showed that 40% of respondents believe Czech theatres “regularly” programme contemporary plays, while over 50% think they are “sometimes” programmed. 55% of respondents are confident that “some” or “most” Czech audiences and makers are interested in contemporary Czech plays, while 45% think that audiences and makers are not generally interested in new plays by Czech authors. Many respondents commented that while theatre-makers would like to stage more contemporary plays, audiences are more interested in classic plays. By contrast, our respondents think Czech audiences are more likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation (80% of our respondents think “some” or “most” audiences are interested in contemporary plays in translation, versus 55% for contemporary Czech plays). Confidence in the popularity of contemporary local plays in the Czech Republic was among the lowest we recorded.

[Fig. 5]



**Fig 5.** Nataša Mikulová, Michal Bednář and Vojtěch Vodochodský in *Europe Connexion* by Alexandra Badea. Trans. from French Markéta Damková. Dir. Adam Svozil. Dramaturgy Marie Špalová. Produced by Divadlo Letí. VILA Štvanice, Prague, January 2019. Photo Alexandr Hudeček © Fabulamundi

## 1. Key Players

The main centre of contemporary playwriting is located in the capital city of **Prague**, but activity in smaller cities is also lively. In Prague, the most important venues supporting living playwrights are the National Theatre (Narodni Divadlo Praha); Švanda Theatre; X10 Theatre; A Studio Rubín; Studio Hrdinů; Venuše ve Švehlovce; Palmovka Theatre; Kampa Theatre; Studio Dva; Disk Theatre; Na Zábradlí (Theatre on the Balustrade); Vinohrady Theatre; and Dejvické Theatre. Prague is also home to many companies who work in this area: Divadlo Letí (which has a stable home in VILA Štvanice), Vosto5, Masopust and others. In the second largest city, Brno, venues include the Brno National Theatre, HaDivadlo, Husa na Provázku, and the theatre company Divadlo Feste.

**Smaller cities** featuring work in this area are České Budějovice (South Bohemian Theatre); Ostrava (venues such as the Arena Chamber Theatre and the Petr Bezruč Theatre); Liberec (with its puppet venue Naivní Theatre focusing on children's theatre and the Theatre F. X. Šaldy, which programmes the WTF Festival); Ústí nad Labem (with the Činoherní Studio theatre); Hradec Králové (Drak Theatre focusing on children's theatre and Klicperovo Theatre); and Pilsen (Alfa Theatre, focusing on children's theatre).

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

### 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**Initiating a production.** The most likely way for new play productions to be initiated is for resident dramaturgs or artistic directors of venues or companies to commission a playwright to write a new script, or for playwrights to pitch to venue dramaturgs. Less frequently, playwrights pitch new work to directors, or playwrights' agencies promote their plays with venues and companies. If a play is commissioned by a venue, the playwright is supported by the dramaturg and director along the creative writing process.

**Playwright Fees.** Playwrights based in the Czech Republic find it very hard to sustain themselves through playwriting alone, including the most established. Playwrights under commission tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee—currently “around €750–2,000” for a commissioned play, according to several experts—topped up by 6–12% of gross box office intake. If a play has not been commissioned but has been selected by a venue, the writer is paid through box office percentage only, again 6–12%, without a guaranteed minimum.

**Translator Fees.** If a translation of a play is commissioned, it is usually paid €500–1,100, plus a variable percentage of box office intake, around 5%. If translators have not been commissioned, there is no fee, and they are offered 5–6% of gross box office intake only.

**Play Development Funding.** The development of new plays tends to be funded by authors' private money, or less commonly by state or EU funds. The Czech Literary Fund and the Ministry of Culture provide bursaries for authors to write new texts.

**Length of run and touring.** New play productions in the Czech Republic tend to have repertory-style runs, so that they are performed once to three times a month for two to five years. Sometimes new plays tour to a few other national venues after the premiere, but do not tend to tour internationally. National tours most commonly happen in theatres that do not have a permanent ensemble.

**Exchange with other media.** Many Czech playwrights also write for TV, film or radio, and the exchange between media is the norm. One expert commented: “It is impossible to live off plays, so you have to write for other media, or have other jobs.” The Czech national radio, especially the stations called Vltava and Dvojka are key players in contemporary playwriting because they commission new plays “more often than theatres” and “pay better rates,” according to several experts.

**Prizes.** Prizes for scripts that have yet to be produced include the Evald Schorm Award for emerging playwrights and translators, run by the Dilia agency, which comprises several categories, including Best New Play, Best New Adaptation and Best New Translation; and the prize for Best New Play awarded by the Aura-Pont agency, which has a category for Best Radio Play too and is open to any script regardless of the author’s agency affiliation. Theatre Letí run the Mark Ravenhill Prize for Best Production of a New Play, which contributed to promoting the culture of contemporary playwriting in the Czech Republic.

[Fig. 6]



**Fig 6.** Theatre Letí, Prague.

## 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Gatekeepers.** Most theatres and companies in the Czech Republic employ resident dramaturgs (who are also sometimes playwrights themselves), whose role it is to source and suggest new plays to artistic directors. In state theatres, the dramaturg’s tasks include picking the best plays that would develop the ensemble, matching plays with directors and

supervising rehearsals on all matters of text. However, artistic directors of venues have the last word in the selection of new plays for production.

**Agencies.** Local theatre and literary agencies, Aura-Pont and Dilia, also have a key role in promoting authors working in Czech and Slovak, and also in foreign languages. These agencies, which offer a copyright fee collection service and look after playwrights' professional needs, also operate on a commercial basis—charging 10% of royalties—to sell works by represented authors to state-run venues and independent companies. Both Aura-Pont and Dilia fund speculative translations of foreign plays. The promotion of writers happens mostly through the agencies' own trade magazines, *DILIA News* and *Aura-Pont Papers* (both published quarterly), which are a pivotal way to communicate with professional dramaturgs around the country. Most authors in the Czech Republic are affiliated with one of these agencies and many dramaturgs, though not all, heavily rely on the agencies' magazines to find new plays. One expert commented: “Czech agencies cannot be compared to what we know from other countries like the U.K. or Germany. It's important to realise that there are only two agencies for thousands of foreign and hundreds of Czech playwrights. The promotion that agencies do is effective, but it's not targeted—it's very generic.”

### 2.3 Education, publishing and press

**Higher education.** Czech higher education institutions offer acting, directing or dramaturgy courses, which can include some creative writing sessions and practical playwriting modules, but otherwise specialist playwriting courses are not available at drama schools, such as the DAMU in Prague and the JAMU in Brno. University theatre studies departments, such as the one at Prague's Charles University and the Masaryk University in Brno, concentrate on history and theory.

**Publishing.** Plays appear to be rarely published as books in the Czech Republic, and those that are published are mostly by established writers. The publishers Větrné Mlýny and Akropolis have published many contemporary plays, including those by the most established writers.

**Press.** Articles about contemporary plays appear to be very infrequent in the general press, such as in national newspapers. Contemporary plays appear to attract more attention in specialist theatre magazines, such as *Svět a divadlo* (World and Theatre), and *Divadelní noviny* (Theatre News), and in culture magazines such as *Revolver revue*. The theatre magazine *Svět a divadlo*, published bimonthly, includes a new contemporary play in each new issue. The webzine *i-divadlo.cz* publishes professional and amateur reviews of plays. Audience development and public engagement activities do not appear to be high on the agenda.

[Fig. 7]



Fig 7. Poster for the production of Alexandra Badea, *Europe Connexion*, Theatre Leti, Prague © Fabulamundi

### 3. Advice for foreign playwrights

“The role of theatre agencies in Czech Republic is significant so I think it is important to have an agent (or agency) here as well. Do contact Dilia or Aura-Pont. Also, it is good to know which theatre or company specializes on contemporary drama and try to be in touch with them (and this is also something the agency can help with).”

“I think the best approach is to send your work directly to dramaturgs of the theatres, rather than wait for your work to be discovered.”

“Unfortunately, my advice would probably be: write for less than seven actors and write comedies.”

## France

France has built a supportive environment for theatre-makers and playwrights through sustained state funding of the arts and a nurturing interest from theatre gatekeepers, such as artistic directors, and from audiences. Yet according to our respondents, levels of activity in the field of contemporary plays are shrinking. One expert affirmed that: “The overall impression one gets from France is that it’s currently not producing many contemporary plays, if compared with the U.K., for example.”

Our survey showed that 55% of respondents think French theatres “regularly” programme contemporary plays, while 35% think they are “sometimes” programmed: that’s 90% in total. 20% of respondents are confident that “most” French audiences and makers are interested in contemporary French plays, while 60% think “some” are and 15% think that they are generally not. Our respondents’ view is that French audiences and theatre-makers are marginally more likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation, but the distinction is nearly negligible. Contemporary plays in translation are staged relatively frequently in France, including in prominent settings. Data from our survey on the popularity of contemporary playwriting shows that French experts had the fourth lowest confidence level in the popularity of the field among the countries we surveyed.

One of the issues that emerged from the conversations we had with experts was that our survey respondents were almost entirely working in the subsidised sector and their responses did not consider the commercial sector. However, the commercial sector also works with living playwrights. Sadly, the two sectors seldom cooperate, so the present report focuses on the subsidised sector.

[Fig. 8]



**Fig 8.** Laureline Le Bris-Cep in *Brefs entretiens avec des femmes exceptionnelles* (Original title: *Entrevistes breus amb dones excepcionals*; English: *Brief Interviews with Exceptional Women*) by Joan Yago. Trans. from Catalan Laurent Gallardo. Dir. Laureline Le Bris-Cep, Gabriel Tur et Jean-Baptiste Tur. Produced by Théâtre Ouvert. Théâtre Ouvert, Paris, September 2019. Photo: Christophe Raynaud Delage © Fabulamundi



**Fig 9.** Anna Bouguereau and Jean-Gabriel Tur in *Brefs entretiens avec des femmes exceptionnelles* (Original title: *Entrevistes breus amb dones excepcionals*; English: *Brief Interviews with Exceptional Women*) by Joan Yago. Trans. from Catalan Laurent Gallardo. Dir. Laureline Le Bris-Cep, Gabriel Tur et Jean-Baptiste Tur. Produced by Théâtre Ouvert. Théâtre Ouvert, Paris, September 2019. Photo: Christophe Raynaud Delage © Fabulamundi

## 1. Key players

Paris is the main centre for theatre and contemporary playwriting culture in France, but activity is highly decentralised to other large and mid-size cities such as Avignon, Strasbourg, Lille, Saint Étienne, Marseille and Pont-à-Mousson. Paris boasts three writers' theatres which mostly programme living authors (Théâtre du Rond Point, Théâtre de La Colline and Théâtre Ouvert), and many venues that programme some new writing alongside other genres, for instance Odéon–Théâtre de l'Europe; Théâtre 13; Le Cent Quatre; Théâtre de la Cité Internationale; Théâtre Paris-Villette; Théâtre de la Ville; MC93–Bobigny; Les Plateaux Sauvages; Théâtre de la Bastille; Théâtre La Bruyère; Théâtre de Belleville; Art Studio Théâtre. The Comédie Française occasionally programme new plays.

Important venues around the country include: the Theatre National de Strasbourg; Théâtre National Populaire–Villeurbanne and the Théâtre des Célestins in Lyon; the Théâtre du Nord Centre Dramatique National in Lille; the Centre Dramatique National de Reims, the Théâtre Joliette-Minoterie in Marseille; the Théâtre Nanterre–Amandiers; La Manufacture Centre

Dramatique National de Nancy; the Comédie de Saint Étienne, Chok-Theâtre and L'estancot in Saint Étienne; the Théâtre 71 in Malakoff; the Théâtre National de Bretagne in Rennes; and the Théâtre de la Cité in Toulouse.



**Fig 10.** *Pour ton bien* (Original title: *Per il tuo bene*; English: *For Your Own Good*) by Pier Lorenzo Pisano. Trans. from Italian Federica Martucci. Dir. Tommy Milliot. With Matthias Hejnar, Caroline Menon-Bertheux, Miglen Mirtchev, Adrien Serre, Agnès Sourdillon. Staged reading produced by Théâtre Ouvert. Théâtre Ouvert, Paris, May 2018. © Fabulamundi.

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

### 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**Playwright Fees.** According to the majority of our respondents, it is difficult to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in France, and many authors have second jobs in teaching, directing, acting or similar, including some of the most established. Playwrights tend to be paid a fee of between €2,000-5,000 for a commissioned play, depending on the theatre and on the stage of their career, plus 10% of gross box office intake. If the play has not been commissioned, it is common practice to offer playwrights 10% of box office only. However, French authors can count on funding opportunities offered by the state to support themselves during writing periods.

**Translator Fees.** Translators of contemporary plays tend to be paid a fee of between €500 and €2,000 for a new translation of a contemporary play that has been commissioned, again depending on the status of the theatre and the playwright, plus a percentage of box office split (30/70) with the author. If the translation has not been commissioned, it is often offered a share of copyright only.

**State Theatre Funding.** France is one of the largest cultural spenders in the European Union, especially considering absolute numbers (Budapest Observatory 2019). The French central and local governments subsidise a tiered network of theatres in each region and also generously supports theatre freelancers, also known as the “intermittents du spectacle.”

**Length of Runs and Touring.** New play productions in France tend to have short to mid-length runs of one or two weeks. Productions often tour to other national venues after the premiere, and sometimes also to other French-speaking countries such as Belgium, Switzerland or Québec.

**Play Development Funding.** There are many funding streams supporting the development of new plays, so it is not necessary for authors to self-fund development work. Authors wanting to take the time to write new work can apply for money via EU, national, regional and city councils or other state-funded bodies or funds, but a minority of authors do fund these creative periods through private money. The state-backed organisation ARTCENA (previously named Centre National du Theatre), helps theatre-makers, including playwrights, with development funds. The scheme, called Aide à la Création des Textes Dramatiques, offers cash bursaries for authors and further funding if new plays are staged, and applies to both contemporary plays written in French and foreign-language plays translated into French. The French Ministry of Culture, the Fondation Beaumarché, the SACD (Société des Auteurs et des Compositeurs Dramatiques) and the Centre National du Livre also offer support for writers to develop new work. La Chartreuse in Villeneuve, near Avignon, provides free spaces for authors to write intensively for short periods.

**Exchange with other media.** French playwrights sometimes write for TV, film or radio, and the exchange between media is common, but not the norm. Contemporary plays are often programmed on France Culture radio station, which regularly commissions new radio plays.

[Fig. 11]

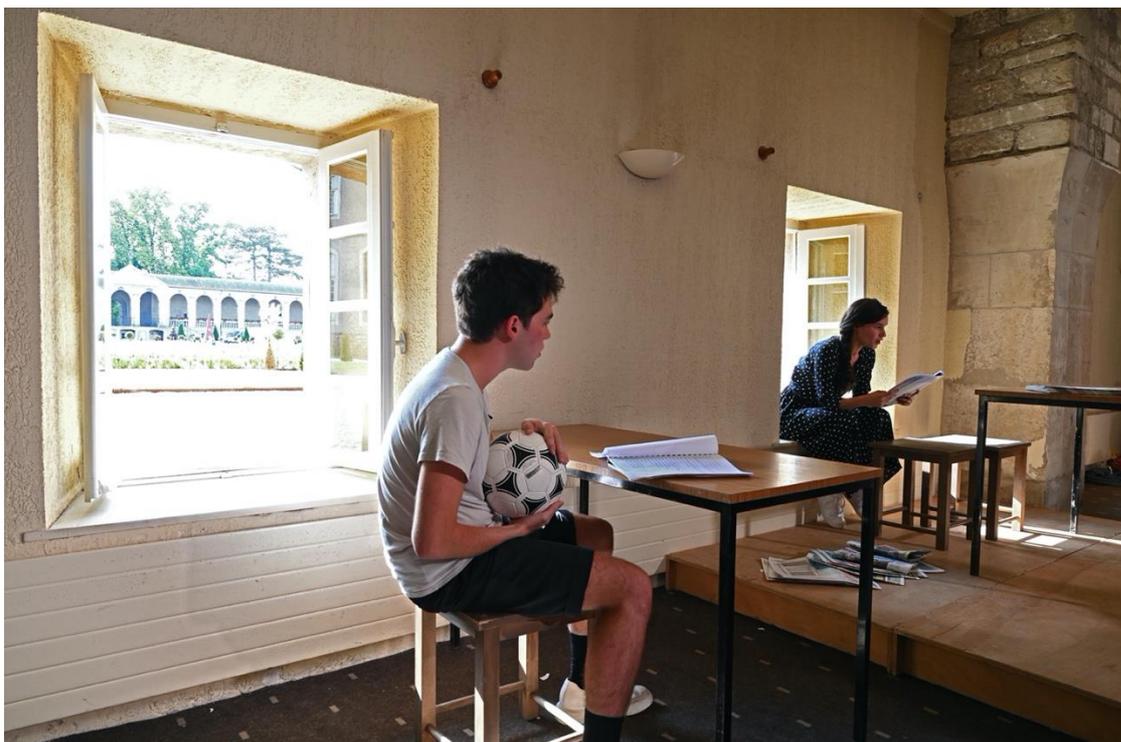


Fig 11. *Fenêtre* (English title: *Windows*) by Ayşe Bayramoğlu. Trans. from Turkish by Selin Altıparmak. Dir. Hubert Colas. With Etienne Galharague, Louise Guillaume. Staged reading produced by La Mousson d'été. La Mousson d'été 2019. Photo by Eric Didym © Fabulamundi.

## 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Gatekeepers.** Artistic directors of venues, companies and festivals play a big part in selecting new plays for production. Some big venues have an artistic advisor or dramaturg who is in charge of selecting plays, or sometimes the shortlisting process is taken over by reading committees. Literary departments attached to venues, whose task it is to select writers and plays for production, exist only in very few institutions, such as Théâtre Ouvert, la Colline, La Manufacture/La Mousson d'Été, TNS, Comédie Française, and Rond Point.

**Reading Committees.** Reading committees are a particularly widespread model in France: these are advisory panels attached to theatre institutions, publishers, venues and festivals, whose job it is to scout new plays, both in French and in translation, for production, publication or translation. Reading committees often partner with one another to ensure they keep each other informed or work together to support authors. According to some experts, however, reading committees have limited influence over what is actually staged. The Eurodram network, which was founded in France, also functions as a reading committee, with national reading committees now scattered around Europe.

**Maison Antoine Vitez.** France is unique in Europe for having an institution specifically dedicated to the translation of foreign plays into French, namely the Maison Antoine Vitez (MAV). This extraordinary institution, entirely supported by the Ministry of Culture and Communication, provides funding, training, talks and general assistance to theatre translators and foreign authors. The Maison Antoine Vitez supports fifteen new play translations from foreign languages into French every year with around €2,500 each, selected by language committees and a panel of theatre-makers. The Institut Français, which is also funded by the Ministry of Culture and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promotes French culture and francophony around the world, including some translations of French plays into other languages. The SACD also offers funding streams specifically targeting the translation of new plays.



**Fig 12.** *La Maison sur Monkey Island* (Original title: *Das Haus auf Monkey Island*; English: *The House on Monkey Island*) by Rebekka Kricheldorf. Trans. from German by Leyla-Claire Rabih and Frank Weigand. Dir. Mathieu Bertholet. With Eric Berger, Nicolas Chupin, Marie-Sohna Condé, Alexiane Torrès. Staged reading produced by La Mousson d'été. La Mousson d'été 25th anniversary edition, 2020. Photo by Boris Didym © Fabulamundi.

**Agencies.** Commercial literary agencies that promote playwrights are not a common model in France and, as a result, most French authors do not have an agent whose task it is to represent them. The SACD acts on behalf of authors to collect copyright fees.

**Initiating a Production.** The most likely way for new play productions to be initiated is for directors to commission new plays, or alternatively for playwrights to pitch plays to directors or companies. Less frequently, venues or producers commission or select new plays from writers. In terms of making productions of a play in translation happen, the most likely pathways are either venues sourcing new plays via French directors, or developing relationships with foreign playwrights or directors, or translators pitching translations of new plays to venues and directors.

**Prizes.** The most prestigious prizes for contemporary playwrights in France are the Molière Prize for Francophone Living Author; the Grand Prix de la Littérature Dramatique; the Grand Prix du Théâtre of the Académie française; the SACD Prize; the prize of the Journées de Lyon des auteurs de Théâtre.

[Fig. 13]



Fig 13. *La musique et le mal* (Original title: *Musica y mal*; English: *Music and Evil*) by Lola Blasco. Trans. from Spanish (Castilian) by Clarice Plasteig. Dir. Claudia Stavisky. With Tamara Al Saadi, Maud Le Grevellec, Catherine Matisse. Music: Philippe Thibaut. Staged reading produced by La Mousson d'été. La Mousson d'été 25th anniversary edition, 2020. Photo by Boris Didym © Fabulamundi.

## 2.3 Education and press

**Higher Education and Other Training.** At higher education level, practical playwriting courses are available at drama schools and universities, leading to qualifications in playwriting. The most prestigious institutions offering them are the École of the Théâtre National de Strasbourg (TNS); the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts et Techniques du Théâtre (ENSATT) in Lyon; the École of the Théâtre du Nord in Lille; the École of the Comédie de Saint-Etienne; the École Supérieure d'Art Dramatique (ESAD) in Paris; and the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique (CNSAD), also in Paris. University theatre departments also offer BA and MA courses in playwriting, directing and dramaturgy, which include some practice, such as the Sorbonne Nouvelle–Paris 3; Université Paris Ouest Nanterre; Université Grenoble Alpes. Short professional-level courses and development opportunities are offered by institutions such as La Mousson d'Été, Théâtre Ouvert and La Chartreuse.

**Publishing.** Contemporary plays by established and emerging authors are regularly published in France and they are also very well distributed in both independent and chain bookshops. There are many publishers that specialise in theatre, including in texts by living authors and plays in translation. The most prestigious and best distributed publishers are: L'Arche; Actes Sud Papiers; Les Solitaires Intempestifs; Éditions Théâtrales; Éditions Espaces 34; Éditions Quartett; and Éditions Théâtre Ouvert/Tapuscrits.

**Press.** Articles about contemporary plays are not very frequent in the general press, such as *Le Monde*, *Libération*, and *Le Figaro*. Culture and theatre magazines are very popular in France. Theatre-focused magazines tend to cover contemporary playwriting more often: *Théâtre/Public* (quarterly); *Alternatives Théâtrales* (published three times a year); *Frictions* (published three times a year); *L'Avant Scène Théâtre* (20 issues per year); *La Terrasse* (monthly); *Théâtral magazine* (bimonthly), *Incises* (yearly); *lestroiscoups.fr* (online news and reviews), *La Scène*; *Le Piccolo* (for children's theatre practitioners); *Théâtres* (quarterly); *Parages* (published twice a year by the TNS); *UBU Scènes d'Europe* (bilingual French and English, published three times a year). Online publications include: *Théâtre contemporain.net* (practical information, videos and reviews website); *Sceneweb.fr* (daily theatre news).



**Fig 14.** The Prémontrés Abbey in Pont-à-Mousson, La Mousson d'été festival venue. Photo by Eric Didym © Fabulamundi

### 3. Advice for foreign playwrights

“Have your work translated into English (or better, into French with a good translation) and then send it to the most influential reading committees in France to get your work selected and produced by them (those committees include: Artcena, La Mousson d'Été in Pont-à-Mousson, Théâtre Ouvert in Paris, Théâtre national de Strasbourg, Montevideo in Marseille, and La Comédie-Française in Paris).”

“Send your plays to the local partners of Fabulamundi (Mousson d'Été and Théâtre Ouvert for France) or get in touch with a translator at the Maison Antoine Vitez, or translate it into French and send it to reading committees (Rond-Point, Theatre de la Colline, de Strasbourg...).”

“Send your text to La Maison Antoine Vitez and to publishing companies such as L’Arche or les Éditions Théâtrales.”

## Italy

A contradictory picture of Italy's contemporary playwriting and theatre translation culture emerged from our survey and interviews. Many experts confirmed that interest in new plays has increased manifold in the past ten years and our survey shows that activity levels are high. However, our qualitative data suggests that contemporary playwriting in Italy is currently far from a sustainable field. A new theatre funding reform, introduced in 2015, demands that all state-funded theatres include quotas of contemporary plays in their programming, but otherwise introduced measures that place writers and translators at a disadvantage by discouraging national tours. Overall, the Italian system appears lacking in support structures for local playwrights. While individual exceptions and success stories exist, these appear to thrive through support obtained on international networks.

Of all the countries we surveyed, our Italian respondents and interviewees showed among the lowest levels of confidence around the popularity of new plays in the local language and in translation. Only 33% of respondents agreed that plays by living playwrights are "regularly" programmed by the country's venues, with Romania being the only other country scoring lower. Asked if they thought audiences and theatre makers were interested in new plays, 69% of respondents said that "most" or "some" are interested in contemporary plays in Italian, while only 51% of our respondents thought that Italian audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays in translation. Our respondents' perception is that new plays in translation attract less attention than new Italian plays, but that new plays in translation—especially by the most established foreign authors—are often perceived as more prestigious than new Italian plays.



**Fig. 15** Carlo Valli and Federica Rosellini in *Non mi ricordo più tanto bene* (Original title: *Je ne me souviens plus très bien*; English: *I Can't Remember Very Well*) by Gerard Watkins. Trans. from French Monica Capuani. Dir. Gerard Watkins. Produced by PAV with Teatro di Roma. Teatro Argentina, Rome, May 2019.  
Photo: © Fabulamundi

## 1. Key players

Italian theatre culture is concentrated around some of the biggest cities up and down the country, but it is fair to say most playwriting activities are concentrated in the north and centre of the country. The main centres of contemporary playwriting are located in three big cities which host several dedicated institutions and festivals: **Milan, Turin and Rome**. In Milan, institutions include the Piccolo Teatro, the Teatro Elfo Puccini, the Teatro Franco Parenti, the Teatro dei Filodrammatici, the Teatro i, and the Teatro dell'Arte–Triennale. Festivals in Milan include Tramedautore (the only festival in Italy to focus entirely on contemporary plays) and Danae (which does other genres too). In Turin, we have the Teatro Stabile, the Teatro Piemonte Europa, the Festival delle Colline Torinesi and others. In Rome, venues include Teatri di Roma (Teatro Argentina; Teatro India; Teatro Torlonia), the Teatro Argot, the Teatro Vascello, the Piccolo Eliseo. Rome also hosts Romaeuropa Festival, Short Theatre and Trend festival, none of which is exclusively dedicated to new plays.

**Other regional centres.** The Emilia Romagna region has developed an important network of venues in Bologna, Modena, Cesena and other towns through its organisation Emilia Romagna Teatro (ERT) and yearly international festival VIE, which is very attentive to contemporary international playwriting. Tuscany also hosts lively small-scale venues that programme new plays, such as Teatro della Limonaia (Sesto Fiorentino); Kilowatt Festival (Sansepolcro), Armunia festival (Castiglioncello) and the Teatro Metastasio (Prato). There is also some notable activity in other northern mid-size cities, such as Bolzano (Teatro Stabile), Genova (Teatro Stabile; Suq Festival), Venice (Biennale Teatro) and Santarcangelo (eponymous festival). In Southern Italy, Naples is the most active hub for contemporary playwriting (Napoli Teatro Festival; Teatro Mercadante; Teatro Bellini), while lively scene can also be found in Palermo (Teatro Libero; Teatro Biondo) and Castrovillari (Primavera dei Teatri Festival).



**Fig 16.** Federica Carra, Mauro Milone, Elisabetta Pogliani, Ulisse Romanò and Anna Sala in *Beyond Fukuyama* by Thomas Köck. Trans from German Adriano Murelli. Dir. Renzo Martinelli. Dramaturgy Francesca Garolla. Produced by Teatroi, Milan. March 2019, Teatro dei Filodrammatici, Milan. Foto by Max Botticelli © Fabulamundi

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

### 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**State Theatre Funding.** State funding provides a lifeline for Italian theatre, which does not have a strong commercial sector. Funding, however, is mostly channelled through venues and hardly ever distributed directly to artists. Additionally, experts mention that state and local authority funding for the theatre industry has been routinely cut in real terms in the past 10-15 years (see Budapest Observatory 2019). The 2015 theatre sector reform demands that certain categories of subsidised venues, such as National Theatres, programme at least two plays by living authors per season, of which at least one must be an Italian author. This relatively new legislation results from growing activity levels and has resulted in even more attention towards contemporary plays in the past five years.

**Playwright Fees.** Playwrights find it very hard to sustain themselves through playwriting alone in Italy, including the most established. Most authors do other jobs too, such as teaching, directing, acting or similar, and the most successful also run their own companies, often producing, directing and performing in their own plays too. When a play does get selected for a production by a company or venue, average advance fees for playwrights appear to be between €1,000 and €5,000.

**Translator Fees.** Even the most established theatre translators find it hard to be paid a commission fee, which ranges between €500 and €2,000. More and more venues and companies offer royalties only as a form of payment (with 10% of gross box office split 60/40 or 70/30 between authors and translators, but with as little as 20 going to translators in a large number of cases where local agencies of English-speaking authors are involved in the transaction).

**Length of Run and Touring.** Most productions in Italy tend to have short runs of maximum two weeks—but often less—at any given venue, and this is the case also for new plays. New plays only tour to a few other national venues after the premiere (often to co-producing venues), but do not tend to tour internationally. Many experts have confirmed that, before 2015, it was more common for productions to tour across the country, but the 2015 reform has made it less attractive for venues to tour produced work. This new state of affairs has come to the detriment of authors and translators, who could previously rely on performance rights income to make up for poor advance fees.

**Exchange with Other Media.** There also appears to be little exchange between the theatre and other broadcast media, such as film, TV and radio, and theatre writers struggle to translate their scriptwriting expertise to write screen or radio plays due to “a prejudice and mistrust between media,” according to some experts.

[Fig. 17]



Fig 17. Bogdan Georgescu in *Hic Sunt Leonesse* by Bogdan Georgescu (originally written in Italian, Romanian and English). Dir. Bogdan Georgescu. Produced by Short Theatre. La Pelanda, Rome, September 2018.  
Photo by Adi Bulboacă © Fabulamundi

## 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Gatekeepers.** Italian venues are generally not open towards unsolicited play submissions. In the absence of literary/dramaturgy departments or reading groups attached to venues, artistic directors rely on their network of directors and companies to propose new plays if they so wish, but often “end up filling the new play quota at the last minute with inconsistent choices and low-quality selections,” according to an expert. Stage directors and some independent producers also appear to be influential players. A handful of translators routinely scout and translate plays in the hope some might result in productions, but they have limited influence. Few companies exist that only focus on contemporary plays, so it is hard for authors who do not also direct or run their own companies to know who to contact to have their plays considered for a production.

**Agencies.** A number of literary agencies exist but they only negotiate contracts and do not actively promote their clients with theatres. Most authors in Italy do not rely on agents to promote them, while the SIAE (Italian Society of Authors and Editors) collects fees accrued in relation to publishing, performance and translation rights.

**Prizes.** Few playwriting prizes exist for scripts that have not been produced—the Premio Riccione/Tondelli being the most important one, followed by the Premio Hystrio for Under 35s—yet these do not seem to routinely translate into more commissions or productions for winning writers. The prestigious Ubu Prizes for Best New Italian Play and Best New Foreign Play are awarded every year to plays that have been produced in the past season.

[Fig. 18]

8 | 18 febbraio 2019

**PENTHY SUR LA BANDE**

(PENTESILEA, L'ANIMA DI UNA MARIONETTA)

di Magali Mougel | regia Renzo Martinelli  
con Viola Graziosi

PRIMA NAZIONALE

Teatro i | via Gaudenzio Ferrari 11 | 02 8323156 - 366 3700770 | bigliettiria@teatroi.org - teatroi.org

Fig 18. Production poster for *Penthy Sur La Bande*, by Magali Mougel. Dir. Renzo Martinelli. With Viola Graziosi. Teatro i, Milan, February 2019. © Fabulamundi

### 2.3 Education, publishing and press

**Higher Education and Other Training.** Two prestigious playwriting courses are offered by the Civica Scuola Paolo Grassi in Milan and the Accademia Silvio D'Amico in Rome, where playwrights train alongside actors and directors. However, contemporary plays are seldom taught in University Theatre Studies departments, and extremely rarely in secondary and primary schools. Professional playwriting training is also offered by the Scuola di Teatro Iolanda Gaggero in Modena (part of Emilia Romagna Teatro).

**Publishing.** There are a few publishers in the field of theatre who publish plays. These are Editoria e Spettacolo, Titivillus, Cue Press, Mimesis and Luca Sossella Editore. Publishers are only able to publish plays if a publication fee is paid to cover their costs, given that the market is limited.

**Press.** The general press in Italy does not cover new playwriting very often, according to our experts—neither in the form of reviews nor through features or interviews. The specialist press has near-exclusively transferred online, with only two print magazines, *Hystrio* and *Sipario*, still in circulation. Webzines that cover playwriting are numerous, on the other hand, such as *Dramma.it*; *Teatro e Critica*; *Delteatro.it*; *Ateatro.it*; *Strategemmi*; *Krapp's Last Post*; and *Doppiozero*.

[Fig. 19]



Fig 19. Production poster for *Tu es libre*, by Francesca Garolla. Dir. Renzo Martinelli. With Viola Graziosi, Paolo Lorimer, Maria Caggianelli Villani, Maziar Firouzi, Francesca Osso, Francvesca Garolla. Produced by Teatro i. Piccolo Teatro, Milan, October 2020.

### 3. Advice for foreign playwrights

“Get in touch with a local director or an actor”

“You need to have an Italian translation of your text, or at least an English one, in order to propose it to theatres and companies.”

“Hope for God’s intervention”

“Don’t do it, my friend!”

## Poland

In 2018, one of Poland’s most influential theatre critics, Jacek Sieradzki, famously declared the “end of the contemporary Polish plays problem” as part of his final judging report for the 24th National Competition for Staging Contemporary Polish Plays. He wrote: “This competition was created [in 1994] to encourage Polish authors to write and Polish theatres to stage contemporary Polish plays—we do not have this problem anymore” (Lech 2018). While some respondents disagreed with this view and claimed that most new plays are not of high quality, many experts confirmed that, after suffering under Communism, contemporary playwriting has made a comeback thanks to the Polish theatre system’s efforts towards rebuilding a sustainable ecology in the past twenty-five years.

Our survey showed that 65% of respondents think Polish theatres “regularly” programme contemporary plays, while 35% think they are “sometimes” programmed: that’s an impressive 100% in total. 90% of respondents are confident that “most” or “some” audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays, and only 10% think that they are generally not. Our respondents’ view is that Polish audiences and theatre-makers are marginally less likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation than in plays from Polish contexts. Contemporary plays in translation are staged relatively frequently in Poland, including in prominent settings, and according to an expert “Polish audiences are open and used to seeing themselves reflected in stories coming from different cultures.”

[Fig. 20]



**Fig 20.** Waldemar Barwiński and Zdzisław Wardejn in *Smutek & Melancholia* (Original title: Traurigkeit & Melancholie; English: Sadness and Melancholy) by Bonn Park. Trans. from German Iwona Nowacka. Dir. Piotr Waligórski. Staged reading produced by Teatr Dramatyczny. Teatr Dramatyczny, Warsaw, December 2018.  
Photo: Katarzyna Chmura © Fabulamundi

### 1. Key players

Warsaw and Cracow are the main centres for theatre culture in Poland, but many respondents agree that smaller cities play a very important role in the Polish contemporary playwriting ecology. The capital, Warsaw, currently hosts important venues such as Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, National Theatre Warsaw, Teatr Powszechny (Common Theatre), Teatr Żydowski, Teatr WARSawy, Nowy Teatr, TR Warszawa, Teatr Imka, Teatr Dramatyczny, Teatr Studio, and Teatr Współczesny. Warsaw is also home to the Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne (Warsaw Theatre Meetings Festival) and Nówka SztU.K.a (New Art Festival), which takes place at the Theatre Institute. Cracow is on a par with Warsaw when it comes to contemporary playwriting in Poland: the Stary National Theatre, the Łaźnia Nowa, the Teatr Słowackiego and the Boska Komedia Festival are some of the venues and events that contribute to that ecology.

Important venues and events around the country include: in Poznań, the Teatr Animacji, Teatr Polski, Teatr Nowy, *Metafory Rzeczywistości*, and the SztU.K.a SzU.K.a Malucha programme for young people at the *Centrum SztU.K.i Dziecka*; in Gdynia, the Playwriting Award Festival and the R@port Festival; in Bydgoszcz, the Festiwal Prapremier and Teatr Polski; and in Wrocław, the Grotowski Institute, Wrocławski Teatr Lalek and Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny. Worth mentioning are also the Modjeska Theatre in Legnica; the Teatr Współczesny in Szczecin; and the Teatr Wybrzeże in Gdańsk.

[Fig. 21]



Fig 21. Interior, Teatr Dramatyczny, Warsaw. Photo by Kasia Chmura.

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

## 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**Playwright Fees.** It remains difficult to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in Poland. Many authors have second jobs, including some of the most established. Some playwrights also work as resident dramaturgs in theatre venues. Playwrights tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee—which tends to be between €1,000-2,000 whether it has been commissioned or not—and percentage of box office. However, many are also paid through a percentage of box office only, which is typically around 5-7% of gross box office intake.

**Translator Fees.** Theatre translators mostly earn a combination of flat fee and percentage of box office for translation rights or, less frequently, a commission fee only. According to our experts, flat fees for translators of an average-length play tend to be around €1,000-1,500 for commissioned translations, and the share of box office to be expected for copyright is around 3%.

**Play Development Funding.** According to our respondents, periods of development, in which playwrights work at their desks, are often sponsored by public money—whether state, regional or city council funding. For instance, City Councils often award competitive artist scholarships to residents of that area. Some respondents report that artists' private money is often needed to support creative periods. Crowdfunding is an emerging model too. Institutions such as the National Book Institute, the Instytut Książki and ADiT Agency offer funding streams specifically targeting the translation of new plays. The Drama Laboratory at the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw organises play development activities for both Polish and foreign authors, such as readings with professional actors and directors.

**Initiating a production.** Polish venues do not have an established tradition of commissioning authors; instead, venues select new plays that have already been written, often via directors or companies. Once a play is selected, then the author gets supported throughout the creative process which may include some rewriting. According to our respondents, the most likely way for new play productions to be initiated in Poland is for directors or companies to commission new plays from authors, and then companies pitch to venues; or for authors to pitch to directors and companies, who then pitch to venues. Less frequently, it is venues who commission new plays. In order to make a production of a play in translation happen, the most likely pathway is that local directors know about or develop relationships with foreign playwrights and then pitch a project to a venue, or translators propose new foreign plays to venues, directors or companies. Alternatively, venues source foreign plays or develop relationships with foreign authors, and less frequently producers commission translations of new foreign plays.

**Length of Runs and Touring.** State-funded theatres work with stable ensembles and a repertory system, so a new play can be on for many years if it proves popular. Productions can tour nationally and internationally. Some prestigious productions of foreign plays, like *4:48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane, directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski, have gone on tour to various European countries, including the U.K. and France.

**Exchange with other media.** Many playwrights in Poland also write for other media such as radio, film and TV, and exchange with other media is the norm. Contemporary plays are often programmed on national radio, mostly adapted from stage to audio plays. Polish TV also broadcasts televised theatre, including new plays, and occasionally commissions living

authors for the highly popular and long-lasting programme, Theatre TV. The Teatroteka project stages new plays for the small screen.

[Fig. 22]



Fig 22. Exterior, Teatr Dramatyczny, Warsaw. Photo by Kasia Chmura.

## 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Gatekeepers.** Our respondents agreed that the main gatekeepers are artistic directors and literary/dramaturgy departments working for venues and companies but artistic directors definitely retain most power. Literary managers' duties include reading scripts, maintaining contacts with playwrights and, less often, commissioning new work, including translations. Most if not all venues have literary departments that will consider unsolicited scripts in Polish and in Polish translation, including all major theatres in big and smaller cities, such as Teatr Wybrzeże in Gdańsk (which focuses both on new Polish plays and translations) and Teatr im. Jaracza in Olsztyn (focusing mostly on translations).

**Agencies.** The local societies of authors, ADiT and ZAiKS, act on behalf of authors to collect copyright fees for them. Polish authors do not rely on commercial literary agents to promote them.

**Prizes.** There are a number of prizes dedicated to contemporary playwriting in Poland, including: Gdynia Playwriting Award (for Polish plays only); the Theatre Institute's National Competition for Staging Contemporary Polish Plays (for productions); the Strefy Kontaktu

Prize; the Metafory Rzeczywistości Competition run by Teatr Polski in Poznań; the Centrum SztU.K.i Dziecka in Poznań (Children’s Art Centre) for the Best Play for Children; and the Nike Awards (a literary award, sometimes given to plays).

### 2.3 Education, publishing and press

**Higher education.** At higher education level, most respondents agree that playwriting is most often studied in informal workshop settings, not leading to qualifications. Drama schools do offer modules on dramaturgy and playwriting as part of Directing, Puppetry or other courses, but they do not offer specialist playwriting courses. Prestigious schools include the Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Warsaw and Stanisław Wyspiański National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Cracow (AST), where Directing students can select a Dramaturgy specialisation. Practical playwriting courses are also offered by theatre venues through informal workshops, for instance at the Stary Teatr in Cracow, Teatr Wyspiańskiego in Katowice, Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw, the Polski Theatre in Bielsko-Biała, and the Metafory Rzeczywistości Festival at the Polish Theatre in Poznań. University departments tend not to offer practical courses in playwriting, and instead concentrate on a theoretical or historical approach.

**Publishing.** Most respondents agree that contemporary plays by established and emerging authors are “regularly” or at least “sometimes” published as books in Poland. There are a few publishers that specialise in theatre, including in texts by living authors and plays in translation, namely arts and culture publishers Słowo obraz/terytoria, Fundacja Splot Press, Lokator and Jagiellonian University Press. *Dialog* and *Teatr* magazines publish plays in every issue.

**Press.** Articles about contemporary plays are not very frequent in the general press. Theatre-focused magazines cover contemporary playwriting more often: *Dialog*, a monthly magazine, plays a crucial role in disseminating work by contemporary Polish and foreign authors; *Didaskalia*, a theatre quarterly, covers new plays, and is now fully online and open access; and *Teatr*, published 10 times a year. Online publications that review contemporary plays include: *E-Teatr*, a database run by the Raszewski Theatre Institute that has all reviews, details of productions and publicity materials; *Dwutygodnik*; *Teatralny*; and *Teatrologia*.



**Fig 23.** Production poster for *I że cię nie opuszczę* (original title: *Scènes de violences conjugales*; English: *Scenes of Domestic Violence*), by Gérard Watkins. With Paula Kinaszewska Marcin Sztabiński, Agnieszka Roszkowska, Anna Szymańczyk Rachida Hammad, Kamil Mróz. Dir. by Aldona Figura. Trans. from French Aleksandra Stelmach. Produced by Teatr Dramatyczny, Warsaw. Teatr Dramatyczny, March 2019 © Fabulamundi.

### 3. Advice for foreign playwrights

“Invest in a translation into Polish and try to publish a play in Dialog.”

“Finding a director or a good translator with a professional network is the best way to set up a cooperation.”

“Get in contact with ADiT agency and find the right theatres interested in contemporary plays or theatre directors to contact directly.”

“Send your play to Drama Laboratory at Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw.”

## Romania

Romanian experts appeared to have the lowest confidence levels in the popularity of contemporary playwriting among all the countries we surveyed. Our data suggests that opportunities for local playwrights to earn their living are very limited and support systems are lacking for writers and translators. The state offers no incentives to innovate or work with living authors and as a result, contemporary playwriting activity by state-funded theatres very much depends on individual artistic directors. State-run and subsidised theatres tend to work on a repertory system and employ salaried ensembles of actors, often catering for more conservative audiences who enjoy older, classical plays. By contrast, independent theatres, often collectively run by companies, have to apply for funding for every project and tend to programme more new writing because they are able to take more risks, and tend to cater for younger audiences. Overall activity levels are considerable, and some green shoots are visible in a new generation of Romanian playwrights.

Our survey showed that 68% of respondents think Romanian theatres “regularly” or “sometimes” programme contemporary plays. 53% of respondents state that audiences and makers are not generally interested in contemporary plays, and only about 36% think that “some” are. Romanian respondents were the least confident in the popularity of contemporary plays by local authors in their country. Interestingly, our respondents’ view is that Romanian audiences and theatre-makers are much more likely to be interested in contemporary foreign plays: 84% of respondents stated that “most” or “some” audiences and makers are interested in those. One respondent commented: “There is a general mistrust in Romanian contemporary authors. You will probably go and see a classical production; maybe a contemporary foreign (British or American) playwright. But audiences for contemporary Romanian authors are the smallest.” Things are changing, however, with more young audiences interested in new plays by living Romanian writers. Conversely, most respondents agreed that translated plays make up more than half of the total output. One expert commented: “Translations are considered safer in Romania because they have already premiered [so have been tested elsewhere].”

[Fig. 24]



**Fig 24.** Antoaneta Zaharia, Paula Niculiță, Simona Popescu and Mădălina Ciotea in *Gardenia* by Elzbieta Chowaniec. Trans. from Polish Luiza Săvescu. Dir. Zoltán Balázs. Produced by Teatrul Odeon. Teatrul Odeon, Bucharest, May 2018. Photo by Vlad Catană © Fabulamundi.

## 1. Key players

The capital currently hosts venues such as the Bucharest National Theatre, Teatrul Dramaturgilor Români (Romanian Playwrights” Theatre, which actually “very rarely works with living playwrights,” according to an expert), Teatrul de Comedie, the Small Theatre, Metropolis Theatre, the Teatrul Odeon, the Teatrul unteatru, Teatrul Nottara, Centrul de Teatru Educațional Replika (Replika Educational Theatre Centre), Arcub Theatre, ACT Theatre, Theatre Monday at Green Hours, Apollo 111, Macaz Theatre, and Apropo Theatre. Bucharest also hosts several festivals, including Festivalul Național de Teatru, one of the most prestigious in the country; Fest(in) on the Boulevard – International Theatre Festival at the Teatrul Nottara; the Festivalul Comediei Românești Fest-CO (Romanian Comedy Festival) at the Teatrul de Comedie; and the Bucharest Fringe (Independent Theatre Marathon) at the Teatrul Apropo.

Other important mid-size cities around the country include: Târgu Mureș, with its National Theatre, Ariel Theatre, 3G independent theatre, University of the Arts Theatre, and Yorick Studio; Timisoara, home to the Timisoara National Theatre, the Romanian Dramaturgy Festival, and the independent venue Aualeu; Piatra Neamț, which hosts a Youth Theatre (Teatrul Tineretului) that premieres new Romanian writing, and the Piatra Neamț International Theatre Festival every year; Craiova, which is home to the National Theatre Marin Sorescu, with its 11plus1 independent/contemporan Festival showcasing the best independent theatre of the season, including plays; Cluj-Napoca with its National Theatre, which sometimes programmes new writing, the experimental venue Reactor de Creatie si Experiment (Creation and Experiment Reactor), which organises Drama 5 Residency; Sibiu, which also hosts its National Theatre, Gong Theatre and the Sibiu International Theatre

Festival. Worth mentioning is also the Festivalul Internațional de Teatru pentru Copii și Tineret “Luceafărul” (International Theatre Festival for Children and Youth) in Iași.

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

### 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**Playwright Fees.** It is very difficult—if not impossible—to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in Romania. Virtually every author has a second job, including the most established, frequently as directors, actors, teachers or journalists. On average, venues pay playwrights a fee of €1,000–1,500 to acquire the right to perform the play for three to five years. Adding a share of gross box office income—currently 5–7%—is not common in Romania because tickets are very cheap, so the copyright is paid in advance and added to the fee. Once the copyright period covered by the initial agreement expires, another fee is negotiated, which is generally €500 per year. The fee level is the same for commissions—which are not common—and existing plays. The majority of respondents affirmed that artists’ private money is needed to support creative periods. In terms of financial support, the National Cultural Fund Agency plays a part in subsidising writers and projects.

**Translators Fees.** Theatre translators mostly earn a fee only, and less frequently a combination of flat fee and percentage of box office (about a third of 5–7%). Most commonly, the translator’s fee also covers a copyright buyout for three to five years. According to an expert, “The average translation of a play is paid €1,000 for a production, and much less for a reading (€500 on average), while the foreign author receives 7% of box office until they have reached €1,000.”

**Length of Run and Touring.** Independent theatres work with block run schedules, while state theatres have a repertory system and employ ensembles. New play productions tend to have short to mid-length runs of one or two weeks in independent theatres, and occasionally tour to other national venues after the premiere, but do not tend to tour internationally. According to an expert, “In state-run theatres, new plays run for at least one year and are performed on average once a month, but don’t tend to tour anywhere, while new productions of international plays in translation tend to be on repertory for 1-3 years and sometimes tour nationally.”

**Exchange with Other Media.** Playwrights in Romania do not often write for film and TV, and exchanges with other media are very infrequent. Contemporary plays are often programmed on radio—yet not specifically commissioned for this medium—with the programme Teatrul Național Radiofonic being the most popular. Romanian TV also programmes new plays (the TVR3 cultural channel and Television Theatre department produce a handful of shows a year by established authors). However, one expert commented: “Radio and TV don’t really help support the culture of new playwriting.”

[Fig. 25]



**Fig 25.** *Rândunica* (Original title: *La Golondrina*; English: *The Swallow*) by Guillem Clua. Trans. from Catalan Luminița Voina-Răuț. Dir. Oana Leahu. With Monica Ristea-Horga and Mihai Crăciun. Produced by The Studio Theatre of The University of Arts Târgu-Mureș, November 2018. Photo: Cristina Gânj © Fabulamundi

## 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Gatekeepers.** Our respondents agreed that the main gatekeepers in the field are artistic directors and stage directors, who have the power to decide what plays are staged. One respondent commented: “While younger directors (in their 30s) will often work on Romanian texts, established directors—those who work in the large state theatres—avoid texts that have not been validated by national prizes or international success.” One respondent commented: “The interest in contemporary plays is theatre director driven. If a theatre director proposes to an artistic director a contemporary play—this is it. There are no clear strategies toward contemporary drama in Romania. Often programming feels arbitrary and it seldom includes contemporary playwriting.” Another respondent commented: “The theatre system in Romania is director-focused and their proposed projects.” Most venues have “literary secretariat departments,” whose job description however does not include considering unsolicited scripts or making recommendations for selecting plays to add to the repertoire. Translators also have a key role to play, but their power only rests in the extent of their network and social capital, and depending on this, they are able to promote playwrights from other countries.

**Initiating a production.** According to our respondents, the most likely way for new play productions to be initiated in Romania is for directors or companies to contact authors, or for authors to pitch to directors and companies, and for the director/company to then pitch to a venue. On fewer occasions, it is venues who decide to stage a new play by a specific author in collaboration with a director. There is no established tradition of venues commissioning new plays from authors in Romania. In terms of making productions of a play in translation

happen, the most likely pathway is that local directors know about or develop relationships with foreign playwrights, or translators propose new play translations to directors or companies. Alternatively, but this is a lot less frequent, venues source foreign plays or develop relationships with foreign authors, or commission translations of new foreign plays.

[Fig. 26]



Fig 26. Exterior, Teatrul Odeon, Bucharest.

**Agencies.** The local societies of authors, which are supposed to collect copyright fees for authors, are not very widely used. Romanian authors do not rely on commercial literary agents to promote them, as every author is used to promoting themselves.

**Prizes.** There are some prizes dedicated to contemporary playwriting in Romania, including: the Play of the Year Prize by UNITER (also known as the Fundația Principesa Margareta Prize for Dramaturgy); the National Dramaturgy Contest organised by National Theatre Timișoara; the Best Romanian Comedy organised by the Comedy Theatre in Bucharest; and draMA, an annual playwriting competition organized by the theatre of Odorheiu Secuiesc. However, one expert commented: “Winning these prizes does not tend to have much of an effect on playwrights’ careers.” Residencies are offered by Reactor in Cluj (Drama 5), Macaz Theater Coop in Bucharest, the Iasi Festival for Young People, and Transylvania Playwriting Camp (co-produced with The Lark in New York).

### 2.3 Education, publishing and press

**Higher education.** In Romania, theatre universities, such as the Faculty of Theatre and Television at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, coincide with conservatoires and offer practice-based teaching. Romanian universities offer BAs in Acting, Directing, Choreography, Puppet Theatre, Theatre Studies, and Music Pedagogy. At undergraduate level, there are no specialist playwriting courses, but some courses teach devising techniques and basic dramaturgical structures. At postgraduate level, the University of the Arts in Targu Mures (UAT) and the National Theatre and Film University I. L. Caragiale of Bucharest (UNATC) currently offer 2-year MAs in Playwriting. There are also more informal educational opportunities such as workshops offered by venues, such as Replika in Bucharest and Reactor in Cluj, and masterclasses during theatre festivals.

**Publishing.** Contemporary plays by contemporary authors are “rarely” or “never” published as books in Romania as there is no market for play scripts. However, arts and culture publishers such as Tracus Arte, Timpul, Cartea Românească and Charmides sometimes publish plays. On the whole, plays that are released as books tend to be published by organizations such as theatre venues that also have small publishing branches. For instance, UNITEXT is the publishing branch of UNITER, which publishes the Play of the Year winner every year. Nemira and Liternet.ro publish some plays online and as e-books. The Camil Petrescu Foundation, which publishes the theatre magazine *Teatrul Azi*, also publishes plays and books on contemporary dramaturgy.



**Fig 27.** Ioan Batinaș, Cătălina Mustață, Paula Niculiță, Silvian Vâlcu, Cezar Antal, Eduard Trifa in *Pentru binele tău* (Original title: *Per il tuo bene*; English: *For your own good*) by Pier Lorenzo Pisano. Trans. from Italian Florin Galiș Dir. Zoltán Balázs. Produced by Teatrul Odeon, June 2019. Photo by Mihaela Tulea.  
© Fabulamundi.

**Press.** Over 80% of our respondents think plays by living playwrights are “rarely” or “never” covered by national newspapers. Theatre-focused magazines cover contemporary playwriting more often, and include: *Teatrul Azi* (print theatre magazine); *Scena 9* (print theatre magazine); *Scena.ro* (print theatre magazine with a bilingual English and Romanian website); *Observatorul Cultural* (print culture magazine); *Capital cultural* (online culture magazine); *Ziarul Metropolis* (online culture magazine); *Dilema Veche* (weekly print magazine on culture and politics); *Revista 22* (weekly print magazine on culture and politics); and online theatre magazines *yorick.ro* and *amfiteatru.ro*.

### 3. Advice for foreign playwrights

“Meet as many Romanian directors as possible, for now they are pushing new plays on Romanian stages.”

“Approach good theatre directors in their 30s-40s.”

“Contact the Fabulamundi partners in my country, to find a good translator that is connected to the theatre scene, then establish a good relationship with a well-connected translator.”

## Spain

Over the 1980s and 90s, Spain developed cultural politics supporting playwriting and has promoted the work of living dramatists writing in all its four national languages. The system is built on the work of a large number of key producing venues which have developed audiences' interest and taste in this area; education institutions such as drama schools offering playwriting qualifications; and professional support organisations providing the right networks for playwrights to develop their careers. Many of our experts have expressed a positive view of the culture, opportunities and support networks around playwriting throughout Spain. However, our experts have expressed that more could be done in Spain to promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion in the field.

All of our respondents are confident that Spanish theatres programme contemporary plays “regularly” or at least “sometimes.” Some 89% of respondents are confident that “most” or “some” audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays, and only 10% think that they are generally not. Our respondents' view is that Spanish audiences and theatre-makers are as likely to be interested in contemporary plays in translation as they are in plays from other local Spanish contexts. Contemporary plays in translation are staged frequently in Spain, including in prominent settings, and Spanish audiences are used to watching theatre in translation or in foreign languages. Our respondents' perception was that new foreign plays attract the same amount of attention among audiences and theatre-makers as new Spanish plays.

[Fig. 28]

**Fig. 28** Patricia Bargalló, Babou Cham, Josep Julien and Oriol Roca in *Avinguda Nacional* (Original title: *Národní Třída*; English: *National Avenue*) by Jaroslav Rudiš. Trans. from Czech Naila Rami Oms. Dir. Martí Torras Mayneris. Produced by Sala Beckett. Sala Beckett, Barcelona, November 2020. Photo by ?? © Fabulamundi.

### 1. Key players

Barcelona and Madrid are the main centres for theatre and contemporary playwriting culture in Spain, with one expert commenting that “80% of all theatre activity in Spain is concentrated in these two cities.” In Madrid, important venues include the Centro Dramático Nacional; Teatro Español; Teatros del Canal; Teatro de la Abadía; Kamikaze Pavón; Teatro del Barrio; Nuevo Teatro Fronterizo; Nave73; Teatros Luchana; Teatro Pradillo; Teatro Galileo; Sala Cuarta Pared; and Umbral de Primavera. Barcelona is home to Sala Beckett; Teatre Nacional de Catalunya; Teatre Lliure; Antic Teatre; Tantarantana; El Maldà; Sala Flyhard; La Villarroel; Teatre Akadémia; Sala Atrium; and Sala Hiroshima.

Other important venues around the country include Sala La planeta in Girona; the Teatro Lope de Vega and Sala La Imperdible in Seville; the Teatro Romea in Murcia; the Teatro Principal in Alicante; the Teatro Colón in La Coruña; the Teatro Cuillas in Las Palmas, and many more. Festivals play an important role for contemporary playwriting in Spain. The Muestra de Teatro Español de Autores Contemporáneos in Alicante focuses on contemporary dramatists, while other festivals include plays as part of a wider programming strategy: the

GREC Festival (Barcelona), Temporada Alta (Girona), TNT (Terrassa), FiraTàrrega (Tàrrega) and Festival d'Otoño (Madrid).

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

### 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**Playwright Fees.** It is difficult to sustain oneself through playwriting alone in Spain. Many authors have second jobs, including some of the most established. Commissioned plays are paid an average of €5,000-7,000 plus 10% of gross box office intake. For plays that have not been commissioned, playwrights now tend to be paid through a combination of flat fee of about €2,000-3,000 and 10% of box office, but many are still paid through a percentage of box office only.

**Translator Fees.** Theatre translators mostly earn a combination of flat fee and percentage of box office for translation rights, or less frequently, just one of these two types of fees. If they are paid through the 10% of box office intake, this has to be split 70/30 or 60/40 between the author and the translator respectively).

**Play Development Funding.** Authors wanting to take the time to write new work can apply for money via regional and city councils or other state-funded bodies or charities, such as SGAE and the Institució de les lletres catalanes, or they can seek a commission from a commercial company which would provide an advance, but many authors do fund these creative periods through private money. The national Ministry of Culture, local governments, and local councils offer some support for writers to develop new work. All the main venues and festivals, such as Sala Beckett, Institut del Teatre, Teatre Nacional del Catalunya, Temporada Alta and Nuevo Teatro Fronterizo offer some form of support to writers developing new plays. Bursaries for writers are available every year: the Beca Leonardo by the Fundación BBVA, and the Beques Carne Montoriol.

**Length of Run and Touring.** Productions of new plays by Spanish writers tend to have short to mid-length runs of three-four weeks, and sometimes tour to other national venues after the premiere. Some prestigious productions also tour internationally to other European or Spanish-speaking countries. New productions of international plays in translation tend to have shorter runs and only tour nationally.

**Exchanges with Other Media.** Many, if not most, Spanish playwrights also write scripts for radio, film or TV. Working across media is very common for writers, “especially since the 1980s,” according to one expert. Radio Nacional de España programmes radio plays, and the prestigious Margarita Xirgu Radio Play Competition (Premio de Teatro Radiofónico Margarita Xirgu) has raised the profile of this genre.

### 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Initiating a production.** The most likely way for new play productions to be initiated in Spain is for playwrights to pitch their work to directors, venues or producers; alternatively, it is producers, companies or venues who commission new plays from authors. Prestigious drama schools also make sure to promote their students’ work into festivals and venues nationally and internationally.

**Gatekeepers.** Artistic directors of venues and festivals play a big part in selecting new plays for production in Spain and act as the main gatekeepers. Literary/dramaturgy departments only exist in larger institutions, such as Teatre Nacional de Catalunya in Barcelona and the Centro Dramático Nacional in Madrid. The latter has an established reading committee too. Production companies play a key role in the Spanish contemporary playwriting ecology, and some of them focus almost entirely on new writing, such as La Zona, Pentación and Smedia. In terms of making productions of a play in translation happen, the most likely pathway is that local directors know about or develop relationships with foreign playwrights. Alternatively, producers commission translations of new foreign plays or venues collaborate with foreign authors.

**Catalandrama.cat.** The Fundació Sala Becket has created an online archive specifically focusing on the translation of plays, namely the Catalandrama.cat website, which provides free access to Catalan plays translated into other languages.

**Agencies.** The SGAE acts on behalf of authors to collect copyright fees for them. There are very few commercial literary agents representing playwrights, such as Marta Fluvia and Conchita Piña, and they tend to work only with the most established writers. This makes it impossible for Spanish writers to rely on agencies to promote them or negotiate on their behalf.

**Professional Organisations.** The FiraTàrrrega is an international performing arts fair that takes place in Tàrrrega every September and offers an opportunity for movers and shakers to come together and decide what to promote next: as such, it is an important networking event. Other important organisations are the Academia de las Artes Escénicas—open to all theatre-makers, with membership by request, which supports the industry with many initiatives, including publishing the review *Escenarios* and theatre-related books—and the Asociación de Autores de Teatro—which organises shows, events, meetings, prizes, publishes the review *Las Puertas del Drama* and organises the yearly Salón Internacional del Libro Teatral (International Theatre Book Fair), established in 2000.

**Prizes.** There is a remarkable number of prizes dedicated to contemporary playwriting in Spain—many more, and with richer prizes, than in other countries. The most prestigious prizes include the Premio Valle Inclán de Teatro, which offers €50,000 to a single theatre-maker each year—often a dramatist; the Premios Max, with categories such as Best Playwright, Best Emerging Playwright, Best Adaptation, Best Playwright in Galician, Best Playwright in Catalan, Best Playwright in Basque; the Premio Nacional de Literatura Dramática; the Premio Ciudad de San Sebastián for dramatic writing in Basque or Spanish; the Premi Born, which offers a cash prize and publication; the Premio Lope de Vega, for plays in Spanish; and the Premio Calderón de la Barca. Many more prizes are available for local playwrights, and this is a testament to Spain's efforts to engage more people with playwriting and build a sustainable playwriting culture.

[Fig. 29]



Fig 29. Exterior, Sala Beckett, Barcelona. Photo by Adrià Goula.

### 2.3 Education, publishing and press

**Higher Education and Other Training.** At higher education level, practical playwriting courses are available at drama schools. According to an expert, “Specialist playwriting courses leading to professional qualifications in Spain appeared in the 1990s and this was a watershed moment, because it signalled to students that playwriting was an actual profession, that they would be taken seriously: then the networks started to appear, and the reading groups in major theatres, and interest started to grow.” Some of the most prestigious institutions offering them are the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático (RESAD) in Madrid and the other ten Escuelas Superiores de Arte Dramático (School of Advanced Theatre Studies) located around the country. For instance, the Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático (ESAD) attached to the University of Castilla y León in Valladolid offers BA and MA programmes in Directing and Dramaturgy (with some practical playwriting). Other important schools around the country include the Institut del Teatre (Theatre Institute) in Barcelona; Eolia, Escola Superior de Arte Dramàtic in Barcelona; the ERAM School, attached to the University of Girona; and the MA Dramatic Writing at the University of Alcalá, associated to the Asociación de Autores de Teatro (Theatre Authors Association). Sala Beckett in Barcelona offers prestigious workshops and courses at various levels, mostly focused on writing for theatre.

**Publishing.** Contemporary plays by established and emerging authors are regularly published in Spain. There are many publishers that specialise in theatre, including in texts by living authors and plays in translation. Some of these are: Arola Editors, La Uña Rota, Editorial Aflera, Ediciones Irreverentes, Sial Pigmallon, Editorial Proa, Re&Ma, Artezblai,

Comanegra/Institut del Teatre in Barcelona, Punto de Vista Editores, Edicions 62, Alba, Col.lecció Dramaticles - Pou del Petroli, Ediciones Antígona, Fundación SGAE, Teatro del Astillero, Ñaque Editores, Bromera, continta me tienes, Órbita.

**Press.** Articles about contemporary plays are not very frequent in the general press, but some of our respondents think plays by living playwrights are “sometimes” covered by national newspapers, such as *El Mundo* (mainly through its magazine supplement *El Cultural*), *ABC*, *El País*, *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia*. Theatre-focused print magazines tend to cover contemporary playwriting more often, and they also all have online sections: (*Pausa.*), the review of Sala Becket; *Artezblai*, a national theatre and dance magazine in Castillan; *Entreacte*, a Catalan theatre and film quarterly; *Primer Acto*, a national bimonthly theatre magazine; *Las puertas del drama*, a national yearly theme-based theatre magazine; *ADE Teatro*, a magazine published by the Spanish Association of Stage Directors; *A Escena*, a free monthly theatre magazine and website; *Artescénicas*, a quarterly magazine published by the Spanish Academy of Dramatic Arts in Madrid. Online publications that review contemporary plays include: *Revistagodot.com* (theatre and culture), *Elcritic.cat* (generalist), *Nívol.com* (culture and arts), *Teatral.net* (theatre focus); *Itacaeolia.cat*, the magazine of the Escola Superior d’Art Dramàtic; and the webzines *Teatrebarcelona.com* and *Teatromadrid.com*.

### **3. Advice for foreign playwrights**

“Have your plays translated (at least into English). And be sure it’s a good translation!”

“Send your plays to Sala Beckett!”

“Find local actors and directors and pitch your play to them!”

## United Kingdom

The U.K. has one of the most established and supportive playwriting cultures among the countries we surveyed. Despite English-language authors being among the most translated in every other country, British theatre does quite badly at making space for foreign-language authors. One of the key strengths of the U.K. system on the international stage is the sheer influence and prestige associated with its cultural products. This cultural and symbolic capital supports the sector by attracting tourist audiences to U.K. theatres, creating demand for U.K. plays in translation and international tours of U.K. productions. Despite the U.K.'s cultural spending and subsidies for the theatre being low compared to other countries such as France and Germany, playwriting has remained a viable business—at least before the coronavirus pandemic hit—because venues can count on relatively high ticket revenues.

100% of respondents were confident that U.K. theatres “regularly” or at least “sometimes” programme contemporary plays: the U.K. had the highest percentage of confidence in the popularity of the field out of all the countries we surveyed. Just over half of respondents believe that “most” U.K. audiences and makers are interested in contemporary plays written in English, and nearly all remaining respondents think at least “some” are. With regard to contemporary plays in translation, respondents are split equally between two large groups (35% each) affirming either that “some” audiences and makers are interested, or that “generally they are not.”

[Fig. 30]



**Fig. 30.** Theo Solomon as Chorus in *Suzy Storck* by Magali Mougel. Trans. from French by Chris Campbell. Dir. Jean-Pierre Baro. Produced by Gate Theatre. Gate Theatre, London, November 2017. Photo: Helen Murray. Watch the full production in English here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6zlnonOZYc>

## 1. Key players

The main centres for contemporary playwriting in England are located in London and a few other big cities, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle and Stratford-upon-Avon. In Scotland, the main centres are Edinburgh and Glasgow. Cardiff and Belfast are the main centres in Wales and Northern Ireland. In London, several venues are almost exclusively dedicated to new plays: the Royal Court Theatre, the Bush Theatre, Theatre503 and the Hampstead Theatre. Besides this, virtually all major subsidised venues and some commercial venues programme contemporary playwriting, including: the National Theatre, the Almeida, the Young Vic, the Old Vic, the Yard, the Arcola, the Gate, the Kiln, the Finborough, the Donmar Warehouse, the Lyric Hammersmith, the Theatre Royal Stratford East, Soho Theatre, the Globe, the Bridge Theatre, and the Orange Tree Theatre. The Unicorn also programmes some new plays but only for young people.

Other significant venues around the country are the Traverse (Edinburgh), the Tron and the Citizens Theatre (Glasgow), the Royal Exchange (Manchester), the Birmingham Rep, Sheffield Theatre (The Crucible), the Bristol Old Vic, Plymouth Theatre Royal, the Lyric Theatre (Belfast) and Sherman Theatre (Cardiff). The Edinburgh Festival, Chichester Festival, Brighton Festival, London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), and Vault Festival in London all showcase new plays.

[Fig. 31]



Fig 31. Caoilfhionn Dunne as Suzy in *Suzy Storck* by Magali Mougel. Trans. from French by Chris Campbell. Dir. Jean-Pierre Baro. Produced by Gate Theatre. Gate Theatre, London, November 2017. Photo: Helen Murray.

## 2. Systems and practical conventions

### 2.1 Funding and income opportunities

**State Theatre Funding.** In the past fifteen years, the U.K. has spent less than France and Germany on culture, both proportionally as a share of GDP, and in absolute terms, despite having the second largest GDP in Europe after Germany (Budapest Observatory: 11). This is because the arts are expected to be run like businesses in a market economy—and theatre is no exception. As a result of high customer demand and offer, competition between venues is stark. According to the majority of our respondents, the most established playwrights in the U.K. can sustain themselves through playwriting alone, but most tend to have second jobs.

**Commissioning Practices and Playwright Fees.** The U.K. has an established commissioning and sourcing system for new plays, with most venues and companies having a “literary department” (literary managers are similar to the German resident dramaturgs, in that they evaluate and select plays and establish relationships with writers and directors, but U.K. literary managers are less involved in practice and rehearsals than their German dramaturgs). The wealthiest and most established theatres will allocate a share of their annual budget to commissioning new plays from the authors they are interested in and which they think better suit their audiences’ tastes and needs. It is understood that only a fraction of all commissions will actually be selected for full productions, but the commissioning fees—ranging from £5,000 to £20,000 depending on context—constitute a sizeable proportion of a professional writer’s income. For a new play that has not been commissioned, fees range between £6,000 and £8,000. If commissioned plays turn out to be inappropriate for the commissioning venue, they can be sold or passed on to other venues.

**Translator Fees.** Translator fees in the U.K. vary widely and it is difficult to generalise. However, it is possible to generalise for three tiers: fringe productions, the subsidised sector and the commercial sector. For fringe productions, translators can earn between £0 and £1,000, plus a share of 10% of copyright split with the author at a ratio of 30/70, 40/60 or—very rarely—50/50. For major subsidised productions, our experts told us that translators can expect to be paid between £1,500–5,000 to author the version of a script that will form the basis of rehearsals for a production, plus about 10% of gross box office split with the original author. Some U.K. theatres commission “literal” translations of foreign plays, that form the basis for further creative work by an adaptor (usually a local playwright who does not speak the foreign language). When a “literal” is commissioned, the translator is offered a small fee, usually around £1,000, which includes a copyright buyout. For commercial productions, translators can earn between £5,000 and £10,000. If a new production happens to be a new translation of a classic or of a new play, this will be paid up to £10,000 by the most established subsidised and commercial theatres.

**Length of Runs and Touring.** Royalties at 10% of box office income provide substantial additional income as most new plays stay on for an average of 4 weeks, with the most successful ones being eligible for so-called “West End transfers,” whereby a subsidised production extends its run in a for-profit venue in London’s commercial theatre district, the West End, though often with different casts. These extended runs can go on for months and even years (for instance, Lucy Prebble’s *Enron* and Jez Butterworth’s *Jerusalem* were seen in the West End for several years). Occasionally, after West End transfers, productions of plays

by local living playwrights go on tour within the U.K. (for instance, *Enron* toured nationally), and the most successful new plays can tour internationally (for instance, *Enron* toured to New York and then to Australia; Arinzé Kene's *Misty* toured the US).

**Exchange with Other Media.** Many if not most established British playwrights also write for other media, such as TV, film or radio and an exchange between media among writers and actors is the norm—less so for designers, directors and producers. Contemporary radio plays, especially written for this medium, are often programmed on U.K. stations, such as BBC Radio 4, which has an extensive programme of commissions.

**Bursaries and Residencies.** Bursaries are made available—mostly to local playwrights, rarely to international writers—by a wide array of charitable and state organisations, such as the Arts Councils, and from venues themselves—it is impossible to list them all. The most prestigious residencies are run by the Royal Court Theatre and have recently included the International Residency and the International Climate Crisis Residency (which are not held regularly, but as and when funding becomes available). The Court also offers fellowships, awards, writers' groups, and mentorship opportunities for first-time, young and emerging U.K.-based writers.



**Fig. 32.** Rochelle Rose in *The Ridiculous Darkness* by Wolfram Lotz. Trans. from German Daniel Brunet. Dir. Anthony Simpson-Pike. Produced by The Gate Theatre, London. Gate Theatre, March 2017. Photo by Helen Murray.

## 2.2 Gatekeeping and support structures

**Gatekeepers.** Most British theatres have dedicated literary departments, or at least literary managers, who consider new plays by British or English-speaking authors—and sometimes by foreign-language writers too. Literary managers (or literary teams) work with artistic

directors to select new plays for each season and match them with directors. As such, literary departments and artistic directors have joint power to decide which writers to promote.

**Agents and Professional Organisations.** U.K. playwrights are generally represented by agents, who negotiate writers' contracts and have a key role in promoting their clients with organisations looking for new work of a particular kind—yet the primary relationship remains that of the playwright with the venue, director or company. Most agents and many theatres also operate an open submissions policy, whereby unsolicited scripts from writers are encouraged, but these do not have a very high success rate. Some of the most prestigious agencies, for both local and foreign playwrights, are Casarotto Ramsay, Curtis Brown, United Agents, The Agency, Judy Daish, Rochelle Stevens, Berlin Associates, David Higham Associates, Brennan Artists, Julia Tyrell, Independent Talent, Felicity Blunt and JTM. However, it is possible for a playwright to have a career in theatre, particularly at the beginning, without an agent. The Writers' Guild is also an important organisation in the U.K., functioning as a union representing the rights of the playwriting profession.

**Prizes.** The U.K. boasts an innumerable selection of prizes available for playwrights. The most prestigious theatre awards for play productions in the U.K. are the Olivier Awards, which include a category for Best New Play. Other prestigious awards for new play productions include the Critics' Circle Theatre Awards, the Evening Standard Theatre Awards, and the Offies—where productions of translated plays are also eligible. There are also prizes for plays that haven't yet received a production, the most highly regarded of which is the Bruntwood Prize, which offers a first prize of £16,000 and has a section for international playwrights from Canada, the US and Australia. Other prizes each come with their own eligibility rules, such as the Papatango New Writing Prize, the Playwrights' Studio's New Playwrights Awards, the Soho Theatre's Verity Bargate Award, Theatre 503 Playwriting Prize, the Nicke Darke Award, and the Alfred Fagon Award. The only competitions that are open to writers working in foreign languages are the BBC World Service/British Council International Radio Playwriting Competition (which results in a BBC radio commission), the Theatre 503's International Playwriting Award (which offers a production at the tiny, yet hugely influential fringe theatre) and the EuroDram selection (which only offers a recommendation for production and publication). Very few prizes exist for translated plays, and they tend to be literary translation prizes rather than theatre prizes.



**Fig. 33.** Rochelle Rose in *The Ridiculous Darkness* by Wolfram Lotz. Trans. from German Daniel Brunet. Dir. Anthony Simpson-Pike. Produced by The Gate Theatre, London. Gate Theatre, March 2017.  
Photo by Helen Murray.

### 2.3 Education, publishing and press

**Higher education.** At higher education level, practical playwriting courses leading to a qualification are available in drama schools and universities. For instance, the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, a conservatoire attached to the University of London, offers a practical BA Writing for Performance (not just traditional “plays”) and an MA/MFA Writing for Theatre and Broadcast Media; the Drama Centre at Central Saint Martin’s, attached to the

University of the Arts London, offers an MA in Dramatic Writing which also focuses on various media, such as theatre, screen and radio. Other University departments, such as those at Goldsmiths, University of East Anglia, and Edinburgh and Bristol, offer practical MA courses in dramaturgy, playwriting or creative writing with a performance pathway, that are highly regarded by the industry. The Universities of Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh Napier, St. Andrews, Bristol and York also offer practical playwriting courses.

**Publishing.** Plays are often published as books or programme texts, especially if the run is long enough to guarantee enough sales. There is a relatively sizeable market for contemporary scripts in the U.K., given the cultural custom to buy the script when seeing a production and the widespread habit of reading and collecting plays among theatre-makers, students and some audiences. Dedicated independent publishers specialising in theatre and play script publications are rapidly disappearing, but one of the last to stand is Nick Hern Books, who also manage copyright for some plays. Prestigious general publishers that also do plays are Faber & Faber and Bloomsbury (through the prestigious Methuen Drama imprint, and the recently acquired Oberon Books), while Aurora Metro Books are much smaller and publish some unperformed translated drama. Most new plays presented in subsidized theatres are published and sold at the venue from the premiere for the entire run. Very few plays by foreign playwrights are published in the U.K., and these tend to coincide with those foreign plays that are staged professionally in prestigious theatres.



**Fig. 34.** Exterior, The Gate Theatre, London. Photo: Helen Murray

**Press.** Reviews and features about contemporary plays are regularly published in the general press, such as national newspapers, though space and frequency are rapidly diminishing, due to smaller budgets for theatre reviewers. National newspapers covering contemporary playwriting include *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Telegraph*, *The Financial Times*, *The Independent*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and *The Observer*. Contemporary plays feature regularly in theatre-focused publications, such as culture and theatre magazines and webzines, such as *Time Out*, *The Stage*, and webzines *Exeunt*, *WhatsOnStage*, *British Theatre Guide*, *Critics of Colour*, *Disability Arts Online*, *The Theatre Times* and *A Younger Theatre*, as well as more generally culture-focused online publications with a section devoted to theatre such as *The Arts Desk*. Audience development, education and public engagement activities are high on the agenda of most theatre organisations.

### 3. Advice for foreign playwrights

“Do your research: don’t try and sell a painting to a butcher’s shop!”

“Send your script, translated into English, to the Royal Court or the Gate Theatre.”

“Contact your cultural attaché in London.”

“Have your script translated by a professional theatre translator who knows the theatre system in the U.K. If the translation is bad, it will have less than zero chance against those written by English-language playwrights.”

## Conclusion: Best Practices

The aim of this report was to map, evaluate and compare current practices and conventions around contemporary playwriting and theatre translation practices in various European nations, and to see where the field as a whole could learn from local contexts. In this brief conclusion, I list the practices that were highlighted in my conversations with Fabulamundi partners as being essential to creating a sustainable field. These best practices can be found in some—but not all—contexts and have emerged as pivotal in creating a supportive culture where contemporary playwriting and theatre translation can thrive.

With regards to gatekeeping and support structures:

- dedicated literary/dramaturgy departments in venues and companies, such as in the U.K., Germany and Austria, supporting the work of artistic directors with dedicated resources and expertise in selecting, establishing and cultivating relationships with writers;
- sustained and ongoing commissioning practices whereby venues see it as their mission to nurture and develop artists, especially cultivating the work of young authors, such as in the UK, and Germany;
- established state organisations to fund, develop and support the field of theatre including playwriting, such as the French ARTCENA;
- dedicated professional associations or commercial agencies negotiating contracts on playwrights' and translators' behalf, such as the German publishers or British agencies;
- dedicated professional organisations and authors' societies promoting the work of playwrights and translators and offering development and networking opportunities, such as the Czech Aura-Pont and Dilia, or the Spanish Asociación de Autores de Teatro or the British Writers' Guild;
- dedicated structures, institutions or opportunities whose mission it is to select and commission speculative play translations, such as France's reading committees and the Maison Antoine Vitez, and to encourage these to be staged by venues;
- dedicated prizes, paid residencies and bursaries to support playwrights' and translators' creative periods;

In terms of funding and income opportunities:

- sustainable length of run and/or total number of performances per production, so that energies and resources are not spent on short-term projects with no future touring opportunities to hope for;
- sustainable fee and share of copyright levels for playwrights and theatre translators (depending on cost of life and local ticket prices), especially avoiding the model whereby playwrights take all the risk by being paid through share of box office only;
- sustained touring opportunities for productions at national and international level, so that investments to create a production do not exhaust themselves in short runs with no future;
- widespread opportunities for playwrights to work in TV, film and radio, fostering a culture whereby theatre, radio, film and television industries talk to one another to innovate;

In the fields of education and public engagement:

- dedicated playwriting courses in higher education leading to qualifications in playwriting;
- specialist literary and theatre translation courses in higher education, along with further education and further professional development opportunities with a focus on theatre translation practice;
- playwriting and theatre translation courses and workshops for young people in primary and secondary schools;
- theatre and playwriting practice offered as curricular or extra-curricular activity in primary and secondary schools;
- targeted audience development activities with young people and the general public to engage the theatre-makers and theatregoers of tomorrow.

All of the above best practices concern systems of support at national level. However, many partners suggested that the field needs systems or organisations that operate transnationally. The main suggestions were the establishment of a permanent, wider network of venues and festivals, like Fabulamundi, or the creation of a dedicated European Agency for Playwriting and Theatre Translation, utilising the model of France's Maison Antoine Vitez, in order to fund expert reading groups and support a programme of speculative translations from and into as many languages as possible.

Transnational organisations committed to supporting playwriting and theatre translation would make it easier for Europe-based theatre-makers and organisers to share stories and ways of articulating the world through theatre, actively contributing to better representation and inclusion of diverse voices across European stages. We hope that, one day, in the not so distant future, this organisation may become a reality.

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