

IT'S TIME FOR PERFORMING GREEN!



In January 2024, set designers and directors from the Nordic and Baltic countries gathered for three intensive days at Folkteatern Gävleborg. The aim was to investigate how freelance artists can incorporate sustainability into their artistic practice.

The workshop financed by Nordisk Kulturkontakt, was organized by ASSITEJ Sweden in corporation with Folkteatern Gävleborg and Teater Alliansen after an idea from Annika Bromberg, a freelance set designer. In creating and leading the workshop Annika had three partners, Anna Ardelius, also a freelance set designer, Dritëro Kasapi, director and artistic director at Riksteatern and Jacob Teglgård. Jacob is co-founder of Bæredygdigt Kulturliv NU in Denmark, an organization that in just three years, made a huge impact in the performing art sector in Denmark.

Whose responsibility is it?

Often the directors are not involved in the sustainability work, while the set designers, because of their expertise in materials, have become conscious and realized that the

performing art sector must also start to develop their sustainability methods and tools. There is no other option. The responsibility must be shared among artists, theatres, and policy makers.

"To really succeed in advancing sustainability practices everybody must be on board. We need to understand what impact, a clear sustainability vision at a theatre can have on the whole organization"

Annika Bromberg

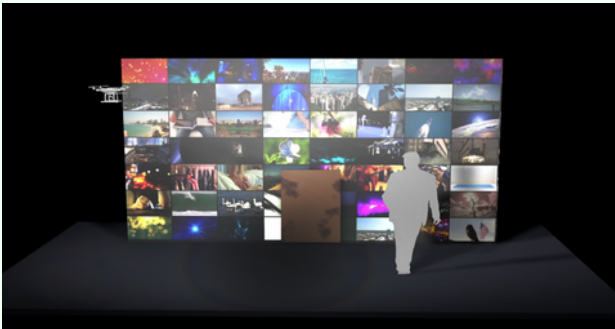
Where to start?

Sustainability in the performing arts is not an easy task, especially if you are a freelance artist. Where to start? Theaters in different countries have started to work with sustainability, but the work rarely includes the artists.

Freelancers to a great degree, are not involved in policy decisions, but only to work on individual productions. So, what happens to the art itself when the artists are not able to influence the conditions and policies under which they work?

2. CONGENIAL CONCEPTS

Combining a strong climate perspective on the play with a sustainable production method.

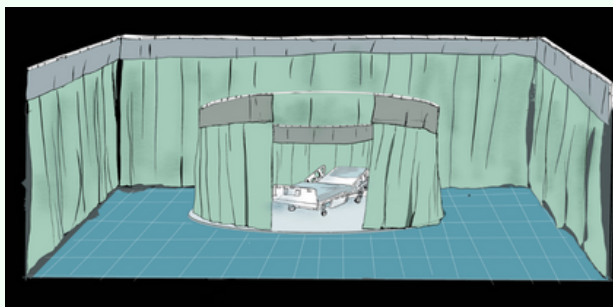


Drawing made by: Reili Evert

In this example the play is rewritten to suit our needs and the production is produced sustainably. The screens are donated afterwards to some local organization.

3. SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

Sustainable production method in all aspects - without a climate perspective but stronger focus on other themes extrapolated from the play.



Drawing made by: Tinde Lappalainen

Here, the play has no sustainable theme, but the set and costumes are made of recycled findings from the local hospital.

So, what do the artists need to be able to work sustainably? And what do they need from the sector?

Freelance artists must understand what power they possess and demand the sector to become more sustainable. Who wants to be an employer that do not care about sustainability? That is going to be an important factor in the future for young people. A lot of what came up during the workshop had to do with creating ways for organizations and artists to get more knowledge.

Here are some of the needs that the workshop participants discovered and wants to pinpoint.

Needs addressed to institutions and policy makers:

- Directors and set designers need structures that creates possibilities to enhance the sustainability work. The overarching structure for that must come from the institutions and funding bodies.
- Directors and set designers need sustainability to become a fundamental parameter at the theatres and in the education at Bachelor, Master and PhD levels.
- Skills development for the professionals in sector.
- The funding agencies, the union and the academia must start to work with Theatre Green Book.
- The funding agencies must acknowledge and understand that it will be more costly working sustainably in a starting phase.
- In the funding applications, funding agencies should ask questions about sustainability to raise awareness.

In their own work:

- A Theatre Green Book translation into all Nordic and Baltic languages.
- An online platform that brings us together.
- A knowledge hub where scenographer, costume designers, light designer, make up designers can contact a person and have a dialogue about what materials to use in specific productions.
- Funding for follow-up meetings like this workshop.
- Shared storage spaces

The prize for hope is action

The final important step of the workshop was the panel discussion with the performing art sector in Sweden, moderated by Jacob Teglgård. The workshop participants presented the results from the workshop and pointed out what they need from the sector.

Kajsa Ravin, just back from a meeting with Art Councils in the north of the UK talked about all countries have less money apart from Estonia and Ireland.

"I can't see the extra funding coming in. We all need to be a part of the solution. How do we do this?"

Gunilla Pettersson Thafvelin from Stockholm University of the Arts also talked about a rough budget period at the school with no more money coming. *"We need a different mindset."*

So, lot of concerns was expressed from the panel about no more money coming in and Therese Hörnqvist from Scen & Film said :

"We can't do anything without Svensk Scenkonst, (employers and industry association). We can't tell the theatres what to do, apart from saying what our members want." ... "We need to address this together as organizations."

Jacob Teglgård replied that they could all write to Svensk Scenkonst, not just pity that they are not here. Jacob took an example from Denmark where they created "a letter of intent" together with the union. This created a new need for a branch organization to do something about it.

Jacob asked the panel the burning question; Who can translate TGB into Swedish? The audience were pleased to hear from Therese Hörnqvist, that she would check this out. Dritëro Kasapi replied that Riksteatern can be a lobbying partner when it comes to creating allies to act together.



The panel members:

Kajsa Ravin - Director general, Swedish Arts Council, Gunilla Pettersson Thafvelin - Head of subject area Performing Arts at Stockholm University of the Arts, Therese Hörnqvist - Scen och Film, Dritëro Kasapi - Artistic director at Riksteatern, Adam Knapasjö, Executive manager at Folkteatern Gävleborg.

Later in the discussion the focus was on artistic freedom and that Art Councils work differently in various countries. Kajsa Ravin from the Swedish Arts Council pointed out the current discussion in the Swedish art community about artistic freedom. “

Is it free, if the artists must address inclusion, or climate? I don't recognize this from other countries.”

Jacob T answers that in Denmark the discussion was different. Calculators, workshops, and a green guide was offered to the art sector. With funding, questions are asked but not forced.

Question about responsibility was raised: maybe it's time for the institutions to step up - to say, come into a sustainable working place, rather than asking artists how they want to be sustainable.

Jacob replies that we must stand on two legs at the same time; create sustainable productions and narratives to create behavioral change.



Happy workshop leaders and producer from ASSITEJ Sweden says goodbye for this time! In photo: Dritëro Kasapi, Annika Bromberg, Jacob Teglgaard, Anna Ardelius and Linnea Lidberg

Dritëro Kasapi summarizes that;

“We need to deepen the work that we are doing and share it. Take the position as a leading actor. I am strengthened by this! Green hushing is a new word for me. Why are we not communicating what we do? We got mocked as a politically correct organization before, we lost status in the field of art, that we are driving agenda in identity politics and climate change - public bashing. It is a different Sweden we are living in now. This didn't stop us from doing “good”, but we don't talk about it. Maybe we should.”

Adam Knapasjö inserts that “We need to talk louder about what we already do and spread the word more.” ... “Democracy is too slow to meet climate changes, it takes too long with regulations- let's pretend we already have the necessary regulations to work sustainable - let's not wait.”

There were a lot of hands raised asking questions concerning how SKH, (Stockholm School of Performing Arts) teach sustainability, but no real answers were forthcoming. The lack of methods and tools was obvious for everybody in the room. The participants, strengthened by the workshop would have liked more constructive visions from the decision makers in the panel, but it is a start.

A lively dialog has opened between artists and others in the sector, a dialog that should be hard for decision makers to ignore.

Roadmap forward

The workshop and panel discussion showed us all one thing - on the question of sustainability, we stand equal. We all need to shoulder the responsibility together, designers, directors, and institutions and policy makers. But to be able to lead, we need tools and strategies.

ASSITEJ Sweden will arrange a seminar at BIBU in May, where participants from the workshop share experiences from their work and hopefully inspire others who want to understand more about sustainability in artistic processes. Hållbart Kulturliv, a new organization, is starting up in Sweden, and will invite interested parties to a kickoff at BIBU. But first Theatre Green Book needs to be translated!

Important sustainability initiatives made by ASSITEJ Sweden to engage the performing art sector in Sweden

- 2020-22 participating in Creative Climate Leadership - Arranged by Julie's Bicycle.
- 2021 Arranging workshop series for touring dance & theatre companies.
- Translating of a 10-step program for sustainability
- 2022 -23 Arranging Climate Saloons - conversations on different topics within the theme of sustainability

Who will take the lead and become a frontrunner?

Important steps Bæredygtigt Kulturliv NU has made to engage the Performing Art in Denmark.

- Collaboration with Dansk Teater - branch organization for 81 theatres in Denmark: declaration of intent that more than 50 theatres signed.
- Political advocacy for creating a national center for sustainability in the cultural sector with Kulturens Analyseinstitut as hosts.
- Creating a carbon calculator and knowledge platform that more than 50 cultural institutions use it today.
- Creating more than 300 unique climate initiatives with cultural institutions.
- Collaborating with KL - the organization for all 98 municipalities in Denmark - creating a network for culture departments and cultural institutions.

Relevant links:

[ASSITEJ Sweden](#)

[Theatre Green Book](#)

[Bæredygdigt Kulturliv Nu](#)

[Beregn Handling.NU](#) (calculator)

[Folkteatern Gävleborg](#)

[Julie's Bicycle](#)

[Riksteatern](#)

Workshop participants:

Set designers:

Emma Örn (SE)

Linda Wallgren (SE)

Linn Henriksson Strååt (SE)

Bryndis Osk Ingvarsdottir (IS)

Sara Hjördís Blöndal (IS)

Reili Evert (EE)

Medile Siaulytyte (LT)

Tinde Lappalainen (FIN)

Mila Nirhamo (FIN)

Directors:

Farnaz Arbabi (SE)

Sofi Orem Skoglund (SE)

Nadja Hjorton (SE)

Johannes Schmid (SE)

Bobo Lundén (SE)

Lelde Čarnecka (LV)

Janika Koppel (EE)

Mille Lindberg Hansen (DK)

Tormod Carlsen (NO)

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