

# Interview

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## TEMPS D'IMAGES 2009 Interview with Miki Branîște, Executive Director of ArtLink

- Were there any differences between organizing TEMPS D'IMAGES in Bucharest (in 2008) and in Cluj? If yes, please explain.

There were differences in 2 two different fields: the relationship with cultural institutions and public authorities.

The Hungarian Theatre was a partner and host of the festival and since the beginning was very open and prompt towards us. I think it was the first time we really felt “at home” in a Romanian theatre. The partnership contract established in the spring of 2009 was fully respected until the end of the collaboration, thing that unfortunately rarely occurs in Romania. The collaboration with the Hungarian Theatre offered us that stability that is necessary

in the beginning. We also benefited from the support of the French Cultural Centre, with which we also established a partnership. Both institutions proved to enjoy working with us, proved that our work was meaningful.

In what concerns the public authorities, we found institutions much more limited than in Bucharest, not used to giving support to contemporary art. We have a hard task to achieve, that of stimulating the appetite of the “elected” for contemporary art. Unfortunately, local cultural departments have a much smaller influence in taking decision in comparison to their counterparts in Bucharest. We are in a situation where our counterparts in Cluj understand us, but this is in vain. In Bucharest there is a centre for cultural projects that supports cultural ONGs' activity. It's an average financing, but it's a support without which it's impossible to start something.

- How efficient was the collaboration between ArtLink and the official institutions (in Bucharest as compared to Cluj)?

After insisting, we managed to establish a partnership with the Town Council of Cluj, which helped us logistically, in some important aspects. Of course, the logistic support was necessary, but not sufficient for an European festival that strives to impose as an important event for the city. The festival is not organized for us, the people behind it, but for the mass audience and the artists or, if you wish, we can use the local representatives' language and say "for the citizens".

With the Local Council Cluj we didn't manage to collaborate in 2009; also, they didn't give us an official answer to our application of February 2009. The selection system is not transparent, one cannot know their score after the file analysis, what is good and bad in their project. What I find odd is that TEMPS D'IMAGES managed to pass an European selection commission formed of very strict people specialized in the cultural field, but at local level has been rejected with no explanations. Right before the festival, a journalist filed a request to the Local Council asking for explanations concerning the lack of financing for the project. The answer was that the budget for cultural projects was too small in comparison with the number of applications. There was no explanation saying we didn't qualify as score or we didn't fit the financing strategy of the

respective institution (if there is such a strategy!).

I think that at local level there should be more attention paid to the cultural and artistic potential of the city and the department, related to their development. Tourism can develop starting with cultural events. A close example is Sibiu and I think we should let pride aside and learn from other experiences. Following a professional study, Cluj is declared to be the city with the most cultural activities (after Bucharest) and with local budgets among the smallest.

It's a serious disproportion that the Town Council and the Local Council know about and they should do something about it. On the other hand, this disproportion shows that there are local organizations that have activities sustained by central or foreign funding and they are competent enough to manage to achieve their projects with a minimum or zero support from the local authorities. I think it would be advised that the 2 institutions take pride in the competence of these (inter)nationally recognized organizations and invest in their development. On the Town Council website there is a cultural strategy that sounds very good, but that unfortunately is not applied. If it was applied, Cluj would be the first city in Romania to have a cultural strategy adapted to the local public and the local cultural producers' needs. Cluj has a different spirit during TIFF. Together with local authorities, ONGs and local cultural institutions could make it permanent and could

(partly) deter the exodus towards the capital of what makes the city's asset, the well trained youth.

- What was the main challenge in organizing the festival in Romania?

On one hand, our purpose was to create bonds between directors / choreographers and visual artists in order to develop projects in the future, to receive proposals for the future editions of the festival. We wanted visual artists to attend performances and directors and choreographers to come more often to vernissages. I think we managed, through the laboratories we organized with guest choreographers and visual artists, to expand the interests of these artists. Obviously there already was a curiosity, but we managed to give a direction to a latent energy, and now a part of the respective artists want to keep working together.

On the other hand, we want TEMPS D'IMAGES to become an important festival of Cluj and to concentrate and to unlock the energy of the youth in this city. In 2009 we met the audience and we liked each other. We still have a lot of work to do, but the audience gives us confidence.

- What is the difference between the Romanian event and the foreign one?

I think the main difference between the Romanian TEMPS D'IMAGES and the rest of the European festivals is the average age of the Romanian participants.

If abroad the insertion of video images in performances, as an essential element in their dramaturgy, has been used for at least 10 years by recognized directors and choreographers, here it is a relatively new practice, and the average age of those that utilize it is between 27 and 30 years. Working with young people that need the festival's support to become known, the festival needs to impose itself among the institutions that can support it.

On the other hand, colleagues from abroad count on a constant and multi-annual support from their financing partners, while in Romania it takes an annual battle to re-establish the partnerships, which makes the organization much more difficult and very tiresome.

- How receptive to the event was the Romanian audience? Was the target reached / surpassed (in terms of number of sold tickets)?

To our delight, both the audience in Cluj and that of Bucharest were very receptive to the performances and the activities of the festival. In Cluj we managed to have a wider audience that in Bucharest, and we had a different contact with the audience. At the end of the performances, there were audience members that approached us, the organizers, telling us they came starting with the first day of the festival, that they recommended it to friends, that they had already checked the artists' websites, that they want to talk to them etc. In Bucharest we weren't approached directly, but the applause told us they liked it and we

received numerous messages through the site, where there is a feedback form. The first edition was a pilot, and we didn't try to win anything out of the sold tickets, but in the second edition we realized we could cover festival expenses from selling tickets. We managed to sell plenty, a bit over our expectations (it should be noted that we had free entrance events also).

- What is the ratio between specialized audience (dancers, choreographers, cultural managers, actors, directors, students in the field) – general audience of the event?

Our audience includes a specialized audience and a general audience. Taking into account the feedback of colleagues from the cultural field and of specialized teachers (theatre, choreography, video) the festival was a success and they suggested people they knew to take part into it. Our asset was the quality of the invited performances.

- How did the contemporary dance visibility evolved in recent years in Romania? What events contributed to the process?

After the creation (in 2005) of the National Dance Centre of Bucharest (CNDB), there was finally a sponsor meant exclusively for dance projects and that was the beginning of a new stage of development of choreographic projects in Romania. Between 2003-2005 important Romanian choreographers performed their work mostly abroad. Starting with

2006, CNDB initiated 2 annual session of financing for the ONGs and artists working in the field of contemporary dance. Due to this financing system, older and new projects managed to induce a state of normality, the level of young choreographers developed, dance pieces were created, Romanian artists were able to take part in European projects, to show their work abroad. Basically, we witnessed the development of the young generation of choreographers and dancers. Among the important events we can mention the annual CNDB season, eXplore Dance Festival, Migrant Body, Sibiu Dans 2007, the Contact Improvisation festival in Cluj, Platforma Dansului Romanesc, Miercurea Legea, and other projects.

- Was there a formula giving the audience of TEMPS D'IMAGES the opportunity to give feedback to the organizers / artists? If yes, what was the audience reactions?

In our communication materials we mention the site [www.artlink.org.ro](http://www.artlink.org.ro) and the mail address [comunicare@artlink.org.ro](mailto:comunicare@artlink.org.ro), through which the audience could reach us. These were the formal feedback channels. Some audience members approached us directly, as I already mentioned, leaving aside shyness, sometimes requesting to meet the artists after the performances. We were thrilled by this approach, because it tells something about the image we created, that of tangible, approachable organizers. We wish to maintain direct contact with the audience, and for future editions we

intend to create surveys to be interpreted by professional sociologists, to create a starting point for the evaluation of the festival.

The audience appreciated the festival events. You cannot fully satisfy everybody through the artistic program of the festival. That is why we tried to have a diverse approach, to invite various performances and we managed

to gain the audience in the 2009 edition. I say it was a fresh start, but we must keep this audience that now has certain expectations, and in 2010 they should enjoy performances of equal quality or even more complex, if the budget will allow us. We don't want to restrict to the actual audience, but to develop it. In order to do this, we prepare "warm up" projects to take place throughout the year.