

## Women Playwrights around Baltic Sea: Networking & Creating

**The project networks young women playwrights from Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and organizes showcases at International Golden Mask New Play Festival in Moscow 1-8th March 2012 and Women Playwrights' International Conference (WPIC) in Stockholm on August 18th 2012, there in cooperation with the hosting Riksteatern ([www.riksteatern.se/wpic](http://www.riksteatern.se/wpic)).**

The project started with six enthusiastic young women gathering in Helsinki on 15.11.2011 to take part in the International Baltic Circle Festival, to build personal networks and to discuss professional issues.

The intention of the project is to stage excerpts from plays by working with professional directors and actors and to spread information internationally about the new drama and the status of women in the theatre scene of these countries. The project is also deeply interested in the question of language, the project itself being a multilingual one, discussing questions like does language rule the identity or do languages divide theatre in Finland or the Baltic countries? New drama is also one of the most interesting movements in Russian theatre today, and it is crucial to get information and contacts related to it, thus to remove many mental borders between the neighbors.

The initiator of the project, Adelfa Agency is a Finnish cultural enterprise, which stresses the importance of networking professionals from neighboring countries. Adelfa specializes in cultural projects with Russia, lately also with the Baltic countries, especially in theatre.

Besides increasing the international interest towards new texts the project will strengthen international networks and the work of intermediary organizations. The project helps to launch the careers of the chosen talented young playwrights. The importance of personal contacts between playwrights is not to be underestimated: the result can lead to powerful new texts, or to new forms of international collaboration in theatre.

**Playwrights:** Emilia Pöyhönen, Finland; Sofia Aminoff, Finland; Lyubov Mulmenko, Russia; Maria Lee Liivak, Estonia; Madara Rutkevica, Latvia; Gabriele Labanauskaite, Lithuania

**Leading group:** Adelfa Agency, Helena Autio-Meloni, initiator and leader of the project, Finland; Christine Matvienko, theatre critic, director, The New Writing at Maska Plus within Golden Mask Festival, Moscow, Russia; Rani Kasapi, director and Mireille Bergenström, project coordinator, International department, Riksteatern, Sweden

**Advisors:** Hanna Helavuori, director/TINFO, Raija-Liisa Seilo, director/Turku City Theatre, Eva Neklyaeva, director/The Baltic Circle Theatre Festival, Finland; Mara Kimele, theatre director/Riga Jaunais Teatris, Latvia; Yana Ross, theatre director/The National Theatre, Vilnius, Lithuania; Raivo Põldmaa, director and Triin Sinissaar, dramaturge/Linnateater, Tallinn, Estonia.

**Supporting organizations:** Labbet, TEKSTI, Finlandsinstitutet i Stockholm, The New Theatre Institute of Latvia, Theatre Union of Russian Federation

### **Short personal biography for the central participants:**

**Helena Autio-Meloni**, leader of the project, founder of Adelfa Agency is a recognized interpreter, translator and producer in theatre. 2009-2010 project manager of the EU-project "Seeds of Imagination" at TINFO, 2005-2008 director of Finnish Institute in St. Petersburg, developing a wide set of cultural activities: Jubilee Year of Finnish Music, the music festival "Towards Vyborg" and the Finnish Children Opera pilot project. She has also worked in publishing and marketing. She has a special talent and passion for putting artists together to create new collaborative projects.

**Emilia Pöyhönen** and **Sofia Aminoff** represent Finland and its two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. They both also work as dramaturges and are interested in international networking.

**Madara Rutkēviča** is the youngest of the playwrights actively taking part in the young Riga theatre scene both as actress and writer. **Gabriele Labanauskaite** is an experienced and active performing arts artist from Vilnius, whose plays have been translated into other languages. **Lyubov Mulmenko** is a promising name of the newest drama in Russia with five well-written plays. **Maria Lee Liivak** also works as a dramaturge in The Tallinn City Theatre.

The project is the first of its kind. It cherishes the personal contacts of the participants, it is trying to build a vibrant small cell of young theatre professionals to be able to grow into an organism capable of surviving in the hard international competition. The subtitle of the project "Together we will be seen!" is promising, it says that by uniting forces, talent, professional knowledge, it is possible to attract the international interest towards the Baltic Sea region and its flourishing theatre life. The aspect of "female writing" is also if not new, at least fresh, and needs updating, and will be of great interest for everybody in the project. The project is also designed not only for presentations to a general audience or theatre professionals, but to bring practical results from the work: the plays should be seen on stage! The aim is to present them to theatre directors, dramaturges, agents etc.

The project is supported by the Kone Foundation and The Nordic Culture Point. Support is also sought from other Finnish and international foundations and state organizations.

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