

18 June - 5 July 2026

Festival 'Theater der Welt 2026 in Chemnitz

Ein Festival des Internationalen Theaterinstituts (ITI)'

Open Call – Co-curation of Theater der Welt

18 June - 5 July 2026

Deadline for applications: 9 June 2024

The **Festival Academy**, an initiative of the **European Festivals Association (EFA)**, in partnership with **Kulturhauptstadt Europas Chemnitz 2025** and **Theater Chemnitz** calls for applications for the **co-curation** of the **Theater der Welt - A Festival of the International Theatre Institute (ITI)**, to take place **from 18 June to 5 July 2026 in Chemnitz, Germany**.

The project will offer the opportunity to up to **8 young curators from The Festival and ITI Academy Alumni community from all over the world** to co-curate the artistic programme of the festival in a 2-year long process which will be supported by various capacity building activities and guided by mentors (experienced festival leaders, local cultural workers and cross-sector experts).

Themes and Disciplines: The curation will focus on five main themes: Partnership, Equality, Sustainability, Interdisciplinarity, and Digitality - and across five disciplines: Opera, Drama, Dance, Puppetry, and Children/Youth.

Two-Year Journey: The curation process will span two years, culminating in a festival from 18 June to 5 July 2026 in the city of Chemnitz, Germany.

Commitment: The process is based on a commitment and availability on a freelance base for a 2 years' time span.

Responsibility: The selected curators will have full creative control and their choices won't be subject to questioning.

What is the festival “Theater der Welt”?

Germany’s largest international theatre festival that takes place every three years.

Since its 1st edition in Cologne in 1981, “Theater der Welt” (engl.: Theatre of the world) has made new aesthetic developments in theatre work from all over the world visible and tangible. This task has since been achieved in changing host cities in cooperation with local theatres. The curatorship of the festival is re-assigned for each festival edition and hosted in a different city in Germany. In this way, new interactions between the performing theatre, the curators of each festival, the different venues in the festival city and the audience are constantly created – a unique and concentrated working format.

It is a **platform for showcasing diverse and innovative performing arts productions from around the world**. Organized by the German Centre of the ITI in cooperation with local and international partners it **promotes cultural exchange, collaboration, and dialogue among artists, performing arts practitioners, and audiences on a global scale**. The festival provides a unique opportunity for international and local artists to present their work to a diverse audience and for attendees to experience a broad spectrum of artistic expressions and visions from different parts of the world.

The partners

The International Theatre Institute – German Centre (ITI)



The ITI – German Centre provides and organises advisory services, festivals, symposiums and professional meetings, publications on the performing arts in national and international contexts, and work in national and international committees. It organises one of the largest international festivals of the performing arts in the Federal Republic of Germany, Theater der Welt. The ITI develops its own projects in the fields of theatre and dance, cultural education, cultural heritage, the culture and creative industries, and is also an information/documentation centre for the performing arts in Germany.

The Festival Academy



The Festival Academy is a NGO based in Brussels dedicated to empowering festival leaders worldwide through capacity building and leadership training. With a focus on supporting emerging festival leaders and underprivileged cultural practitioners, especially from conflict regions, the goal is to create awareness and equality within the creative sector. The Festival Academy conducts in-depth research on how festivals can address important issues like decolonization, racial equity, peacebuilding, inequality and includes a cross-sector exchange with experts from other fields of action such as activists, philosophers, important thinkers of our times. Over the past 10 years, The Festival Academy has been building a global alumni community of over 1400+ festival leaders & cross-sector experts from +100 countries worldwide.

Die Theater Chemnitz

With the musical theatre, philharmonic orchestra, drama, ballet, and puppet theatre divisions, the Städtische Theater Chemnitz is one of the few five-division theatres in Germany. It has earned a high reputation and is a crucial part of the cultural life of the city and the state throughout its over 100-year history. Over 900 events and different guest performances welcome more than 200,000 visitors from near and far each year. With a team of 440 employees, the Chemnitz theatre boasts a profile that includes over 30 premieres staged in two theatres throughout a season, in addition to hosting large concert series and an extensive theatre education program. Since the 2013/2014 season, General Director Dr Christoph Dittrich has successfully led the theatre.

European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025

With the motto "C the Unseen", the European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025 GmbH focuses on activities and artistic projects that have a lasting impact in the areas of socio-culture, art, corporate culture, building culture, food and nutrition culture, the environment, sustainability, children's, youth and senior citizens' activities, as well as numerous other areas of society and culture. To this purpose, it brings together regional, national and international partners.

The board of management

A board of three members, representing the three festival partners, is leading the management process of the festival edition 2026 in Chemnitz:

Inge Ceustermans

General director of The Festival Academy

Ceustermans has a master degree in languages and literature with a specialisation in theatre sciences. She was the general manager for the Brussels based artists' company Needcompany under the artistic direction of Jan Lauwers from 2003-2012 before she starts working for the European Festivals Association (EFA), a network organisation of more than 80 festivals in Europe and beyond. Apart from this, she is consulting different artists on their general strategy and international relations. She is also a member of the advisory committee for the Agency of Arts and Heritage in Flanders. She oversees and manages the international network of worldwide curators and cross-sector experts.



Christoph Dittrich

General Director of the Städtische Theater Chemnitz

Dittrich studied tuba and singing, pedagogy and musical sciences in Dresden from 1986-1991. From 1991, he worked as a musician and dramaturgical assistant at the Elbland Philharmonie Sachsen and was appointed artistic director of the Ensemble in 2002. Since the 2013/2014 , Christoph Dittrich has been General Director of Städtische Theater Chemnitz GmbH. The concept of the production of Wagner's Ring des Nibelungen by four female directors in 2018, which was crowned by the prestigious German Theatre Prize “Der Faust” for Elisabeth Stöppler and her direction of “Götterdämmerung”, received outstanding recognition. Another focus of the theatre's work is cultural education, including a partner school concept, and its connection to the city's society.



Stefan Schmidtke

CEO, Program Director European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025

Studied directing at the Russian Theatre Academy RATI-GITIS in Moscow from 1992 to 1996. From 2011 to 2014, Schmidtke worked as head dramaturge at the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus under Staffan Valdemar Holm. He was then acting director and chief dramaturge at the Wiener Festwochen under artistic director Markus Hinterhäuser from 2014 to 2026. From 2016 to 2018, he built up the structure of the program and event area for the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. In 2020, Stefan Schmidtke took over as Artistic Director of the Theater der Welt festival in Düsseldorf. Since 2021, he has been the CEO and Program Director of European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025 GmbH.



Claudia Roth, the Minister of State for Culture and Media of Germany and ITI President Yvonne Büdenhölzer entrusting the festival to Christoph Dittrich, the artistic director of Theater Chemnitz, and to Dagmar Ruschinsky, the Chemnitz Mayor for Culture.

The city of Chemnitz

Chemnitz, around 850 years old, is located in the centre of Saxony. With a population of 240,000, the city is the third largest in the new federal states and has a unique story to tell - of pioneering inventions in automotive engineering, mechanical engineering or the textile industry as well as courageous entrepreneurs such as Richard Hartmann, Carl Gottlieb Haubold or Louis Schönherr. As **a modern industrial city**, Chemnitz is one of the fastest-growing cities in Germany today. The city is **a technology centre** with a focus on the automotive and supplier industry, information technology and mechanical and plant engineering.

The "City of Modernity" impresses with its cultural and economic diversity, which ranges from **a five-genre theatre** and several **prestigious museums** such as the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, the SMAC or the Sächsisches Industriemuseum to the Technical University as an intellectual centre and research facilities such as the Fraunhofer Institutes.

Tradition and modernity are reflected in exciting urban contrasts, among other things. Unique examples of Bauhaus and New Objectivity or the Kaßberg, one of the largest contiguous Wilhelminian style neighbourhoods in Europe, delight architecture fans. Centrally located historic neighbourhoods such as the Brühl are developing into urban and young districts with a high quality of life. Famous far beyond the city borders: the 7.10 metre high bronze Karl Marx head by Lew Kerbel, popularly known as "Nischel", from 1971.

Chemnitz is on friendly terms with twelve twin cities from Usti nad Labem (Czech Republic) to Taiyuan (People's Republic of China) and Akron (United States of America) and holds the title of European Capital of Culture 2025.

More information can be found in [The Tourism Magazine](#) and on the [website of the city](#).



Open Call for Curators

Apply now to co-curate Theater of The World 2026 in Chemnitz!

Deadline 9 June 2024

Germany's most important international performing arts festival 'Theater der Welt' (Theatre of the World) will take place in 2026 in the City of Chemnitz. The Festival Academy is honoured to be partnering with Die Theater Chemnitz and the European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025, together with the German Section of the International Theatre Institute to redefine the boundaries of festival curation. **We are delighted to announce a unique opportunity for emerging curators from The Festival Academy's/ITI Academy's Alumni community:**

We are jointly calling for experienced curators to apply for co-curating Theater der Welt 2026. We are searching for curators who are committed to the transformative power of the arts and who are interested to be part of an innovative approach to curation.

The curational approach we envision with 'Theatre of the World 2026 in Chemnitz - A Festival of the International Theatre Institute (ITI)' is based on our belief in the **power of collective imagination**. In a world increasingly defined by boundaries, divisions, and singular narratives we need counter-stories to be told. Our approach is a statement of art's capacity to transcend borders and to create dialogue. We aim to **provide a platform for artists from underrepresented regions from all around the globe to share their narratives**.

We call for curators who are not just adept in the arts but also **visionary in their commitment to equity and inclusivity**. The envisioned curational process demands a **collaborative spirit** in a team that weaves together the threads of the main themes of **partnership, equality, sustainability, interdisciplinarity, and digitality** into a coherent narrative for the festival to activate **art's potential for transformative change**.

The European Capital of Culture Chemnitz, die Theater Chemnitz and The Festival Academy believe that **festivals are bridging platforms through which we can create connections that remind us of our collective humanity**. Theater der Welt 2026 Chemnitz wants to be an invitation to curators, artists, as well as audiences to explore, to embrace, and to celebrate our shared human experience.

What is it about?

- Collective Curation** For the first time in history, 'Theater der Welt' will be curated by single individuals working in a **collective artistic team consisting of 6 to 8 curators from all continents** out of TFA/ITI Alumni community.
- Capacity Building** 6 to 8 selected curators with individual perspectives will design the festival in a process of knowledge exchange and respect for differences. The Festival Academy, Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025 and Die Theater Chemnitz will support this process with an **intensive 2-year capacity-building program for the curators selected which includes peer learning, mentoring, and networking.**
- Innovation and Equity** The partners are committed to **innovative and equitable models of curation.** We aim to change dominant narratives, **amplify voices from underrepresented regions**, and counter authoritarianism and divisive narratives. The **geographic focus** of the curation is **inclusive and fully global.**
- Global Community** We aim to **activate our global community of curators** and further **strengthening connections** with this long-term collaboration.
- New Curatorial Models** We are interested in **exploring new curatorial models**, including **curating from within the regions**, respecting **sustainable traveling**, and embracing multiple perspectives.

Who is eligible to apply?

- ✓ You are an **Alumni of The Festival Academy or of the ITI Academy**
- ✓ You are located in one of the following regions: **North America, South America, Western, central and Southern Africa, Europe, Swana region, South East Asia, and Asian islands, Australia and Oceania**
- ✓ You have **3-5 years of experience in curation, practical festival work and deep knowledge and understanding of the arts**
- ✓ You are fluent **in written and spoken English**



What is your role as a curator?

- ➔ You will **make individual artistic decisions** regarding your discipline/geographical area
- ➔ You will **develop the festival's artistic program** from your perspective and **contribute to a collective process with other curators from around the globe** (in the following referred to as "the curatorial team"), supported by experts from The Festival Academy, the ECOC Chemnitz 2025 artistic team and Die Theater Chemnitz.
- ➔ You will **curate within the festival's main themes and across five different disciplines.**
- ➔ You will **prepare a showcase of the most talented voices from your region** (number of artworks to be fixed in the structuring process of preparation).
- ➔ You will **oversee the process of scouting and recruiting artists in your region.**

Selection criteria

Global Perspective

You have an **understanding of global issues and aesthetics** in the performing arts worldwide, and **your network covers a diversity of voices and disciplines.**

Expertise of region

You have an **in-depth knowledge of the region** you are working in.

Vision

You have a **unique vision for the festival** that aligns with the main themes of 'Theater der Welt 2026'.

Diversity and Inclusivity

You are **committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity** in the festival.

Collaboration

You have a **strong ability to collaborate effectively** with fellow curators, artists, partners, and stakeholders.



What do we offer?

Capacity Building

We offer you a 2-year upskilling, networking, and mentoring process. A comprehensive capacity-building program that includes individual and collective guidance:

- You will have **an individual mentor** of your own choice (proposed by The Festival Academy, Capital of Culture experts, or by your own) who you can meet on own demand, minimum 2 times a year in 1,5 hrs sessions
- Tailor-made **group coaching**
- Participation in **online sessions and alumni meetings**
- **Tailor-made programs** to enhance your skills
- **In-person and online meetings** with the curatorial team
- **Participation in 1 in-person activity of The Festival Academy** (a Global Atelier, Festival Study Visit, Alumni Meeting or similar)
- **Group meetings in Chemnitz** (visit of city of Chemnitz and the Theatres of Chemnitz)

International Mobility (travel, accommodation, visa costs)

Travel costs to announced TFA activity, by invitation (with per diem)

Travel costs to announced group meetings in Chemnitz, by invitation (with per diem)

Travel costs in regions for research and scout work (a specific budget will be developed for each curator individually)

Payment

A **fee for curatorial work** (fees will be tailor-made individually, a conversation about this will be part of the selection process – a fair pay will be delivered taking into account the operations in the home country as well as when travelling internationally) Please note: This opportunity is a freelance and a task-based assignment with a fixed fee. No employment! No full-time job! Individual assessment based on individual profile and curatorial assignment to be decided together with the team.

Other benefits

Community Building - Strengthen your connections within a global festival community.

Upskilling - Sharpen your skills and gain hands-on experience in curation.

Innovative Curation - Experiment with new models of collective curation.

Strengthen your unique voice - Give a platform and visibility to artists from your region and boost international collaborations.

Global Storytelling - Showcase stories from a diversity of regions on an international stage.



Selection Process

Selection Committee: The applications will be reviewed by the selection committee of ‘Theater der Welt 2026’, consisting of Stefan Schmidtke, Christoph Dittrich, Inge Ceustermans (the festival board of management)

Phases: The selection process will take place in phases. Step 1: 12 candidates will be shortlisted, followed by individual interviews. Step 2: the final selection of 6 to 8 curators.

Timeline

6 May 2024	Official launch of call for applications
9 Jun 2024	Deadline for applications
Jun/Jul 2024	Evaluation of applications, selection process
Mid Sept 2024	Announcement of final selection
End Sept 2024	Kick-off with partners and curatorial team
Oct 2024 - Jun 2026	Co-curation process, capacity building trainings including mentoring
Jun/Jul 2026	‘Theater der Welt 2026 Chemnitz’ festival

How to apply?

If you are ready to be part of this unique initiative, apply now by filling in the application form (find the [application form](#) on our website or by clicking on the button below) and be prepared to become part of a transformative journey in festival curation.

[Apply here!](#)

If you have any questions or inquiries about the project, please don't hesitate to contact us via fabiola@thefestivalacademy/ info@thefestivalacademy.