

About the birth of a cultural European FOX

Having discovered in the beginning of 2010, the immense literary value and the countless possibilities of the widely spread medieval texts dealing with 'Reynard the Fox' (Roman de Renard, Renaldo e Lesengrino, Reineke Fuchs, Van den Vos Reinaerde, Isengrimus and many others), **the Veneto based Italian commedia dell'arte theatre company TeatroImmagine** - founded in 1989- intends to engage in a multifaceted European cultural project for an audience of all ages.

With '21st United Fox', they want to apply for a Culture Programme (2007 - 2013) grant from EU's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). With this project, TeatroImmagine wants to contribute to the development of cultural cooperation at European level, full of intercultural dialogue and exchange, collaboration beyond the limits of specific disciplines, attempting to encourage the emergence of European citizenship.

Together with the partners, they want to set up between may 1st 2012 and may 1st 2014 a series of creative events in different cultural and artistic fields, brought to the area where the various partners have their home basis. Although TeatroImmagine's starting point is 'theatre', this form of expression has to be treated as just one element out of many. If this project pretends to be eligible for European grants, it has to become much more than just a European *tournée* of an Italian theatre play.

TeatroImmagine went searching for partners working within and across sectors, from at least **3 eligible countries**. (Attention: audiovisual arts are excluded !) Actions that explore means of long-term co-operation are especially targeted. Funds of between € 50.000 and € 200.000 are available, but EU support is limited to a maximum of 50% of the total *eligible cost*.



aka **21°UF**



The search for partners has geographically led to

1. the area around the Flemish town of **Sint-Niklaas** (www.sint-niklaas.be) in Belgium where they met interest from a cluster of town councils, official institutions (municipal academies of fine arts, municipal academies of music, dance and theatre, museums), a Reynaert study society, a folk band, etc.... This area is exactly where 'Van den Vos Reinaerde' was written in the 13th century. Being close to the border with the Netherlands, collaboration with the nearby walled town of Hulst is within reach. (www.gemeentehulst.nl) In Hulst, the statue of Reynaert welcomes visitors into town.
2. the capital of the Slovak Republic **Bratislava** on the river Danube, where they discovered the wealth of Bibiana - International House of Art for children, founded in 1987 (www.bibiana.sk). Coincidence: the church in front of the Bibiana building hosts a series of wonderful wooden 19th century sculptures depicting ... the fox and other animals from the above mentioned tale.

Mutual contacts with both partners have been established between July 2010 and today. With the help of their coordinator **Herman Cole** -Sint-Niklaas born reporter and former Italian teacher- **Teatroimmagine** has regularly performed in Belgium; Teatroimmagine had a meeting with BIBIANA's drama staff in Bratislava in September 2010. Herman Cole visited Bratislava, discovered the Reynard statues and Bibiana in July 2010. During a new visit in September 2010, he also had a meeting with BIBIANA's director and a few weeks later received his consensus by e-mail.

The partners, their skills and possibilities

1. Teatroimagine (www.teatroimagine.com) has established a huge skill in artistically **transforming masterpieces** from the world theatre literature into brilliant performances in *commedia dell'arte style*, easily followed and understood by international audiences; their shows range from 'The Merchant of Venice' and 'Il Barbiere di Seviglia' to 'The Dog of the Baskerville' and 'The Wizard of Oz'. As a high level non professional theatre group they have received -in Italy and abroad- a huge number of **prizes and awards**. Apart from their acting, the members of this company give workshops and trainings around **masks, improvisation and mime**.
2. As a professionally specialized gallery institution **Bibiana** hosts
 - 2.1. BIB, the Bratislava Illustration Biennial, in 2011 in its 23rd edition
 - 2.2. the Biennial of Animation Film, in 2010 in its 10th edition
 - 2.3. a yearly thematic highly creative exhibition on the own premises; the 2010 theme was 'Dragons'! Why wouldn't the theme in 2013 be 'Reynaert and other foxes' ?
 - 2.4. Bibiana is also the home of the 1953 founded IBBY, International Board on Books for Young children; mr. Wally De Doncker -living close to Sint-Niklaas- was recently elected vice president of the Executive Committee.

Worth mentioning: the Slovak town of Kosice -400 km east of Bratislava- will be in 2013 one of Europe's **Cultural Capitals**, together with French Strasbourg.

3. The **Waasland area** situated around Sint-Niklaas offers
 - 3.1. An intramunicipal agreement with a changing presidency between 13 towns and cities in 'Reynaert Country'; Sint-Niklaas has the presidency till end of 2011, Waasmunster comes next, then follow Kruibeke in 2013 and Beveren in 2014. Also see www.landvanreynaert.be
 - 3.2. the SASK (Stedelijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten of Sint-Niklaas – Municipal Academy of Fine Arts), the ASK in Waasmunster, three AMWD's (Academie voor Muziek, Woord en Dans – Academy of Music, Word and Dance). They have a very wide range of courses and attract young and old from far away, even from the Netherlands. Their classes belong to the well developed DKO-offer in Flanders (Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs = part time Art Education).
 - 3.2.1. At the SASK, hundreds of children between 6 and 12 follow *jeugdatelier* (art workshops away from the official schooldays), where experienced art teachers introduce them into all kinds of techniques.
 - 3.2.2. In the AMWD's, children and adults alike get all kinds of performing arts lessons. Including drama, jazz, pop and folk music.
 - 3.3. with "'t Ey", Sint-Niklaas has a very cosy small size (120 seats) but very active and popular centre for worldwide folkmusic, hosting many concerts.
 - 3.4. the Exlibrisverzameling of Sint-Niklaas, where hundreds and hundreds of bookmarks from all over the world form a marvelous collection, including those about

- “Reynaert”. With the great interest for small size graphic art, the XL organizes a biennial of exlibris and similar forms of expression. (Next edition april 2011)
- 3.5. Mr. Rik Van Daele -head of the municipal library of Sint-Niklaas- has been in 1988 one of the founding fathers of the non profit Reynaert study centre “Reynaertgenootschap”. www.reynaertgenootschap.be He has the tools for paving the way to universities in Münster, Lausanne, Utrecht, Louvain-la-Neuve etc. And to IRS (International Reynard Society) -founded in 1975 in Glasgow by the British medievalist Kenneth Varty. As a platform, the Society offers debates, exchanges of ideas an meetings. It focuses on fables, animal epics, *fabliaux*, bestiaries, iconography etc.

Contents of the project (only a couple of possible ideas !)

2010

(Reynaert Country Presidency in Sint-Niklaas)

Between july 2010 and today, possible partners have been continuously exchanging ideas, through internet and Skype in an attempt to get closer to each others and to the final goal. **Exchange is the keyword, not to be forgotten.**

2011

(Reynaert Country Presidency still in Sint-Niklaas)

The project has to be officially calculated and introduced in full detail **before the end of september 2011**. If *Europe* gives it's GO in february 2012, the official kick off date for the entire 24 months lasting project is May 1st 2012. National CCP's –Cultural Contact Points) play a very important role in preparing the official practice

ABOUT 2012

- Why not have Slovak and Italian partners invited as guests to the **inauguration** of the exlibris biennial in Sint-Niklaas on april 9th ?
- What about the **launch** of www.unitedfox.eu somewhere in may ? The first verses of 'Reynaert' refer to Whitsun and the month of may.
- Meetings near Venice/Sint-Niklaas or Bratislava for further **developing** and calculating of ideas.
- Why not plan the participation of Teatroimmagine at the biennial **congress** of the International Reynaert Society in Aix-en-Provence in september ? 2013 is Alicante !
- Why not have the Flemish and Italian partners as guests in Bratislava on september 2nd at the inauguration of the 23rd BIB ?
- **october 1st : deadline introducing project**
- Although for five months nothing is sure, partners keep thinking and working on the project.

2012

(Reynaert Country Presidency in Waasmunster)

- **feb 28th : Europe's YES or NO**
- **may 1st : official start of the project**
From this day on, the partners officially **work together** under the European grant. All expenses made for the project before this date, should not be taken in account when calculating it.

POSSIBILITIES IN 2012

1. In collaboration with the partners, Bibiana starts creating the thematic exhibition to be shown in 2013 and 2014 first in Slovakia, later in Italy and Belgium. Including p.e. a Reynaert-selection from the Exlibris Centre in Sint-Niklaas
2. In collaboration with the partners, TeatroImmagine starts the creation of a theatre piece based *inspired* by Reynaert. Somewhere in august, when Sint-Niklaas holds the biennial Euromarket with handicrafts, TeatroImmagine may perform it's first open air try outs.
3. October ? November ? TeatroImmagine brings its performance to Waasmunster. They combine their tour with mask-workshops for children in the ASK and *commedia dell'arte-classes* at the AMWD.

2013

(Reynaert Country Presidency in Kruikebe)

POSSIBILITIES IN 2013

1. May - september : 'FOX-exhibition' in Bratislava. TeatroImmagine seizes this occasion to have performances in Bratislava of their Reynaert-play, mask-workshops and *commedia dell'arte-classes*.
2. Why not try to include TeatroImmagine in Cultural Capital 2013 Kosiče ?
3. Summer (July - August) To celebrate its 200th anniversary, SAMWD Sint-Niklaas hosts workshops and masterclasses on 'Illustration', given by one or more Slovak illustrators. Inspiration : the UNESCO-workshops traditionally held in Bratislava. Target group: illustrators from the Low Countries (Netherlands and Flanders).
4. End of summer: To celebrate the 60 years of IBBY, one could think of an exhibition and more. Author Wally De Doncker -living close to Sint-Niklaas- is vice president of IBBY's Executive Committee. Flemish IBBY section may in those days commemorate Gregie De Maeyer, first Flemish to win in Bologna the *Premio Grafico* for illustration.
5. Just to mention : In Alicante, the 'International Reynaert Society' holds its biennial congress.
6. September-october : Why not have the partners meet at the opening of the 24th BIB in Bratislava ?

7. Winter : 'FOX-exhibition' in Veneto-area. TeatroImmagine hopes to be able to bring it into a former cinema in Treviso, transformed by a bank group into 'Teatro delle Voci'. www.fondazioneecassamarca.it/wps/wcm/connect/fondazione+cassamarca/Italiano/Fondazione/Patrimonio+immobiliare/Immobili+di+proprietà/Teatro+delle+Voci

2014

(Reynaert Country Presidency in Beveren)

POSSIBILITIES IN 2014

1. Spring ; FOX-EXHIBITION in the Sint-Niklaas area. With the presidency in the hands of Beveren, it might be installed in the OC 't Klooster, a nicely restored former monastery.
2. Parallel to the exhibition, some young Slovak illustrators travel to Flanders. Working together with their local colleagues of the ASK-workshops for children, they guide them in creating an illustrated booklet, getting inspiration from the exhibition.
3. **First of may : official end of '42st United Fox'.**
4. Around Whitsunday : final Get Together in Sint-Niklaas. Making plans for future collaboration.

And more :

1. In 2010 a young folk band has emerged: SURPLUZ. (www.surpluz.com) Their line up is: accordeon, klarinet, bagpipe, guitar and voice. Clarinet in Bratislava's klezmer music (www.klezmer.sk) and accordeon as constant element in the musical background of Teatroimmagine may lead to interesting forms of cross breeding. What about a small size festival hosted in AMWD and music place 't Ey in Sint-Niklaas ?
2. There is a lot of eating and drinking in 'Reynaert'. Not only honey, chicken and mice (!). It sounds like an invitation to cooks from all over the place to join in cooking workshops in Italy, Slovakia and Belgium. A few steps away from Bibiana, Bratislava already has a 'Belgian café' named 'De Zwaan'. The Sint-Niklaas area has a lot of small size breweries. One even produces a 'Reynaert'-beer.

For the reader's information :

When recently she was informed about '21st United Fox', Mrs. Ingrid Stupavska of the Slovak Tourist Office for the Benelux in Amsterdam said to be very interested. And spoke about it with her director in Bratislava.

Please also visit

www.teatroimmagine.eu

www.reynaertgenootschap.be

www.erfgoedcelwaasland.be/product.php?lang=NL&prodid=200&catid=51&itemno=0&pos=33&PHPSESSID=16f2e7ade062ff6531

www.academiesintniklaas.be

www.sint-niklaas.be/leren/onderwijsaanbod/academies/samwd-muziekacademie

www.beveren.be/product/91/default.aspx?id=1684 or

www.academiewdbeveren.be

www.academiewaasmunster.be

Herman COLE

Sint-Niklaas, january 31st 2011