



Veszprém-Balaton 2023
Európa Kulturális Fővárosa

Shine, Veszprém-Balaton!
European Capital of Culture 2023



GREETINGS

When we applied for the European Capital of Culture title in 2018, we set ourselves the ambitious goal of being able to profoundly rethink and inspire our home: the place of an entire region in the world, and the place of the world in ourselves.

After seven fascinating years, at times facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles, we are now well on our way to becoming the first creative region in Hungary to be integrated primarily by vibrant culture. We have shown that even a small town can provide a living space where being a Veszprémer or a local from the Lake Balaton area, being Hungarian and European are inextricably intertwined. We have succeeded in drawing up a common framework for action in which, with Veszprém's leadership, a cultural cooperation could be launched that is capable of shaping the region as a whole.

But the road was by no means a straight one: the construction and preparation that followed the exhilarating day when we were awarded the ECoC title on 14th December 2018 brought many unexpected twists and turns. For a while (which felt like an eternity then), the pandemic challenged the usual formats of cultural consumption, and war in a neighbouring country left its mark on our daily lives – we lived in a very different world in 2023 compared to 2018.

However, sticking to our original plans and goals has, I believe, helped us overcome the obstacles. From Somogyzentpál to Várpalota, from Szentgyörgyvár to Berhida, 116 municipalities, more than 1000 cultural and community professionals and enthusiastic organisers personally became the driving force behind the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 programme. Together, we all tried to rise to this task, which I think has probably been the most complex professional challenge for almost all of us so far. Each one of the more than 700 winning applications has opened up new opportunities and given room for action for local communities – not only for the moment, but also for the future.

The unusual wealth of programmes, ambitions and projects came to be structured, for ourselves and for the public, in the form of nine catchwords – clusters. Through these nine clusters, in fact, the very spirit of our original objectives was brought to life.

The Music/City cluster, which is also a tribute to the UNESCO City of Music title, was intended to raise the special role of music in the everyday life of Veszprém to a new level, and The Busy World of Veszprém projects put our motto 'No more boring Tuesdays' into practice. The name of the Region, Alive cluster, which specifically targets the Bakony-Balaton region, speaks for itself: the previously unknown faces of the more remote Bakony villages and Lake Balaton holiday resorts have come to light. Inevitably, the Fragile Lake Balaton cluster sought to address the ecological and inseparable social dilemmas of the lake.

Bridges projects enabled connections between different social groups and contexts, Reflection drew on cultural memory to make local traditions and heritage accessible again, and the Out-of-the-Ordinary cluster allowed for special occasions of art reception in unusual spaces, outside one's comfort zone.

We were able to give space to unique and unrepeatable artistic performances and communal experiences, exceptional in both volume and quality, in Celebration. The intellectual and infrastructural investments of the Beyond cluster, which is intended to lay the tangible foundations for the future, are designed to have a lasting impact on the cultural life of both Veszprém and the region.

I am proud that together we have experienced and understood that investing in micro-communities, in the lives of local people and in culture can often bring more to the development of an entire region, landscape and identity than if we concentrate on creating the (seemingly more important) physical framework for all of these. In the VEB 2023 programmes, we have been given the time and space to show that in culture, in the arts, in community building, it is not only the outcome of the event that matters, but also the conversations, the shared reflections and the experiments that lead to it.

I hope that this experience will keep with us.

On the following pages, the reader will get to know the most important projects and results of the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 clusters, and, at times, the people behind them.

Friderika Mike
Programme Director
VEB2023 ECoC

CLUSTERS



MUSIC/CITY

We have an elusive goal: we want Veszprém to be the city with the highest proportion of people making music and singing. We don't want to measure it so much as feel it. Because, according to many surveys, cities with more musicians are happier.

Veszprém was awarded the UNESCO City of Music title in 2019, and since then, every day, it has been working to be worthy of this title. Veszprém is Leopold Auer's hometown – and this is a source of pride and also a responsibility.

We believe in building from the bottom up. Starting with musical experiences that appeal to the youngest, training professionals, providing inspiring venues for amateur orchestras and bands, offering unique educational and community opportunities for young and old, beginners and newcomers, breathing new life into choral traditions, and providing musical curiosities for the discerning and demanding Veszprém audience. Music here is not only something for us: it happens to us.



THE BUSY WORLD OF VESZPRÉM

No more boring Tuesdays! Veszprém has always been famous for its big festivals, when for days on end the city is filled with lively activity. But let's face it, weekdays were much less full of artistic encounters – until now! By finding partners in local institutions, enterprising young people and civil communities, we are creating big-city opportunities for cultural hustle and bustle, naturally adapted to Veszprém, preserving and enhancing the spirit of the place. New places and spaces open up that are not just about consumption – but create real community experiences, opportunities, conditions and models for all of us. Old and new public spaces are collectively designed, transformed and occupied. Institutions that previously seemed distant are opening their doors wide and we intend to make them a key part of city life beyond formal occasions. New opportunities for knowledge transfer and exchange are opening up in community spaces, where young people and adults alike can experience and learn through play and experience, whether it's drama, musical instruments, digital skills or media arts.

By rewriting and enhancing the everyday life in Veszprém, it is our unconcealed intention and hope that more and more young people choose to live in Veszprém, stay here or return. Because the city where it is good to be on a Tuesday night has something for every day.



REGION, ALIVE

The Bakony-Balaton region: an unusual density of unexpected good things. A landscape in constant motion, where stories, destinies, hidden treasures and cultural treasures await visitors at every turn. Joining our programme, not only the well-known places but also the hitherto quieter villages are making their voices heard – putting their preservative traditions and future-shaping aspirations into a new and exciting perspective.

The Lake Balaton shore emerges as a meeting place and a hidden backdrop for contemporary art outside the peak tourist season, and the villages of the Bakony region are brought closer to us by unleashing the creative energies of local communities. By 2023, we hope that the new regional networks and cooperation based on authentic and recognised communities of interests and values will be even more characteristic of the people living here. A fully-fledged network could be able to reposition the whole region, opening up new perspectives beyond 2023 and offering the specificity and uniqueness of a high-quality and vibrant cultural life.



FRAGILE LAKE BALATON

The well-being of Lake Balaton is a common concern. There are very few people who are not emotionally attached to this in many ways unique natural and social phenomenon, landscape and culture. Central Europe's largest lake is undeniably one of Hungary's most important regions, whose reality is shaped by countless factors and lies at the intersection of countless interests. In our programme, we address the extremely complex and fragile system of Lake Balaton and its surrounding ecosystem in relation to Lake Balaton and its catchment area.

Do we really know our lake and the landscape to which we are so attached? Are we capable of understanding and recognising our common interests, the interests of the lake, alongside our individual interests? Our projects on the local impacts of climate change, land use change, the unique landscape heritage of the monadnocks, or even the landscape damage caused by quarrying, all invite us to dialogue and thinking together. We want to raise awareness in our own communities that the health of the region's economy and society depends on the health of the ecosystem, and we offer opportunities and knowledge to transform landscape users into responsible guardians of the landscape.



OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY

Veszprém and the region's spaces are particularly suited to serve as a venue for special artistic actions, and to give a unique emphasis to the interconnection of nature – man – art. What is unusual for art can be the most ordinary space in our everyday lives. An experimental performance on a bus No 4, a play in the depths of a forest, street theatre on a beach, a contemporary literary festival in a Zala County village, modern puppet theatre for adults: artists performing in unusual places, working in unusual ways – where there is always a twist in the structure of the encounters!

The invitation to break out of traditional forms is of course extended to the audience: spectators become active participants in the experiments, and new connections are created between landscape, spectator and creator, while the audience becomes a community. By setting an example, these unconventional spaces also open up new horizons for local cultural operators, keeping the arts-infused everyday life of Veszprém and the region in a state of constant renewal.



BRIDGES

From the very beginning, our programme has aimed to connect people and strengthen the culture of coexistence: building bridges between the city and the region, between people who live here, people who work here and their friends from far away, between traditions and cultural environments of the most diverse social groups. Our aim is to promote through our programmes a better knowledge of each other, a fragile understanding and a sense of wonder. We want to live in a community where we can find words – or go beyond words – even when confronted with sensitive and difficult issues.

We believe that it is through personal experience that we can best discover the value of a small community within a majority culture that can preserve its own culture and traditions. It is not just coexistence, but real connection – whereby we are able to change our worldview by imbibing each other's ideas and amplifying each other's values.



REFLECTION

It is no coincidence that artists like to come to Lake Balaton, to the embrace of the monadnocks or the forests of the Bakony to find inspiration. The landscape and the built environment, the culture, traditions and rich heritage that can be found here not only strengthen our own local identity, but through the creative communities and through art, can also show the stories and values that have shaped the city and the region over the centuries and continue to do so today.

We would like to show that tradition, the historical memory of a place, is not necessarily an object of nostalgia for the past, but rather a living heritage, a vital force for identity, and an integral part of our everyday lives and our personalities. With a contemporary eye, we look into the mirror, or rather, the multitude of reflections, in which we see our region's role in the history of European art, public life and politics. We recall the sometimes forgotten histories and faces of families, characters and micro-communities who could still be an inspiration, whose traces still have relevance in shaping messages today. We are learning to recognise our natural and cultural gifts through the historical mirrors and interpretations of the artists who come here, and we hope that motifs and domains that we have not yet been aware of will take shape before our eyes.



CELEBRATION

For us, bearing the ECoC title and celebrating the ECoC Year is a joyful occasion, a unique and unrepeatable opportunity to express the pride we feel and to experience the many things the region has to offer. It is a year-long programme that celebrates not only Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region, but also Europe – in some cases even bringing distant continents closer to us.

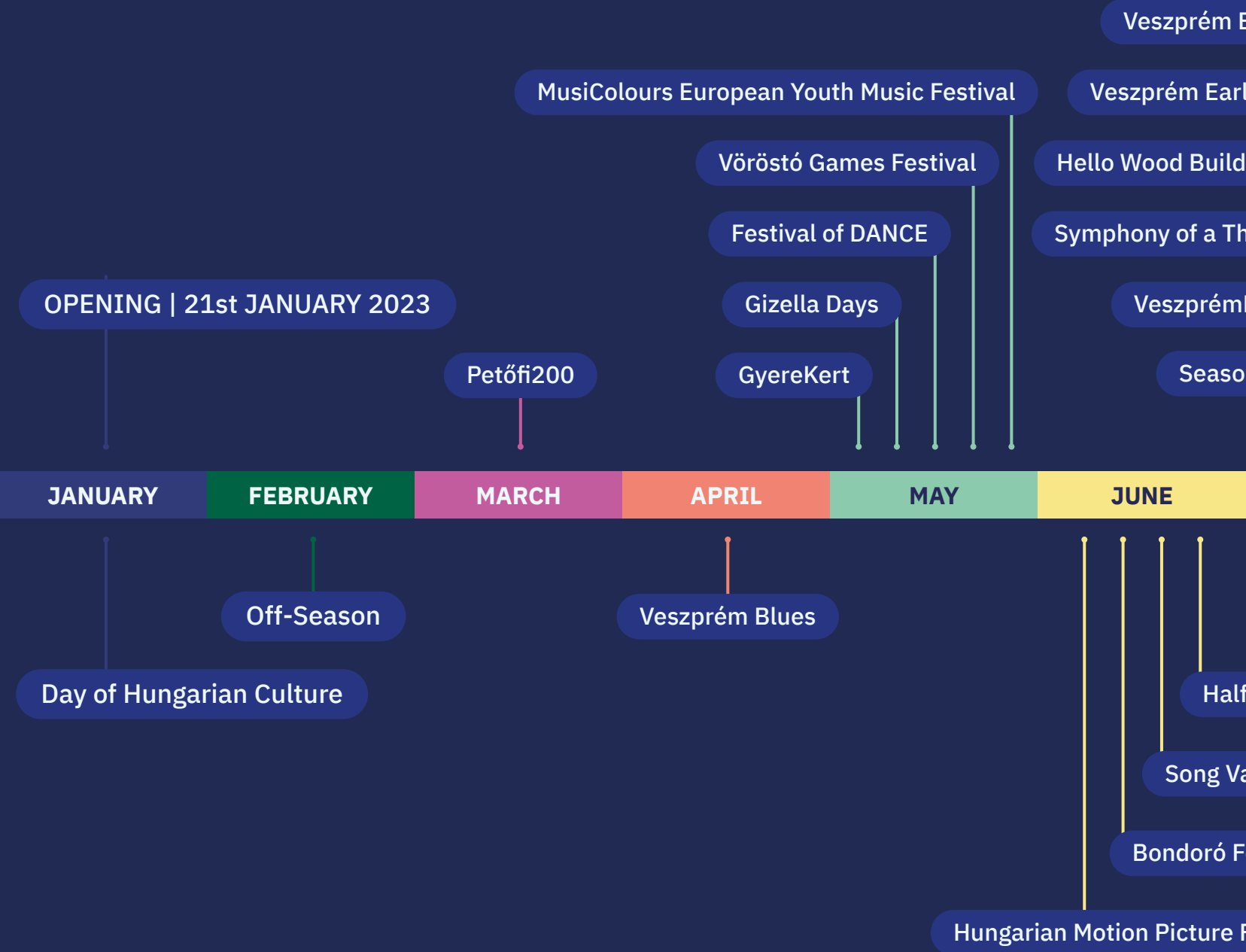
Because we believe that unique and unrepeatable experiences are not just for one city or one region, but for all of us. Everyone will take away something different; some will take away a lifelong concert experience, a dance until dawn, a meeting or a defining professional experience, while others will be sucked in by a spectacle almost out of the future.



BEYOND

Although the title of European Capital of Culture is officially awarded only to 31st December 2023, our programme is structured to help the intensive, innovative community of Veszprém and the region to change scale and develop, creating a solid foundation for the future beyond 2023. We would like Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region to be an attractive tourist destination on the mental map of the Hungarian and international public, not only in 2023 but also beyond, enriched with new horizons, mindset-shaping power and viable cultural achievements in the long term. And last but not least, we would like to create new points of reference and new perspectives for ourselves, for the people who live here: to bring to life places, spaces and model events that can give a new dimension to the everyday life of professional and lay communities. This is perhaps the most tangible expression of our initial aim: to launch a creative rural region with Veszprém as its cultural hub. To create a vibrant, inspiring, new yet long-standing cultural space that is unmistakably recognisable and attractive to European eyes.

HIGHLIGHTED EVENTS



International Convention of Violin Makers and Instrument Exhibition

Ballet Grand Prix

Balatorium Ecological Week

ly Music Days

Auer Festival

er Summit

Margófeszt

ousand

Solar Boat

Fest

Kőfeszt

n

Inota

Chaconne Festival

Madách Festival

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

Street Music Festival

time Festival

Veszprém Folk

alley

Balaton Wine & Gourmet

estival

Jutas Picnic and Olympics

Festival

BALKAN:MOST – powered by WOMEX

Veszprém Jazz

Night of Cafés

Music Hungary Conference & Showcase

Festive Shine programme series

MUSIC/CITY

I believe in systems. This is true even when it comes to something as abstract and seemingly intangible as music, the importance and proven positive physiological effects of which I will say little about now, since it is as clear as day to everyone by now. At least in Veszprém it certainly is. Although it is a source of pride that our musical concept, which at the beginning seemed like a series of l'art pour l'art ideas, by the end of 2023 had painted the picture we had envisioned for outsiders, we sincerely believe that Veszprém did not become a city of music by winning the ECoC title, but on the contrary, its diverse musical life and the spiritual education it has provided through it may have contributed to winning the title. The foundations of this system were thus in place long before the start of collaborative thinking; we were merely coordinating the use of the knowledge that was isolated and the operation and management of the processes created on the basis of that knowledge, establishing a mutual and long-term interdependence between the players, thus setting the model on a course whose future existence will depend much more on individual will than on central involvement.

Thanks to the high number and quality of music programmes in Veszprém, it is relatively easy to get infected – as symbolised by the frequent answer to the question “what will you become when you grow up?”: a street musician – so we have set our sights on the establishment of music as a way of life, in response to the demand. Today, a music-loving local resident can choose between two music schools to acquire the skills they need to develop their musical competence in a creative community of all abilities, and then take them to local stages of any size, from 50 to 5,000 people. And for those whose talent predestines them to achieve more, with Veszprém’s national and international network the sky is literally the limit, as the UNESCO City of Music network and Music Hungary, the largest Hungarian professional conference and showcase festival in Veszprém, are also a huge advantage and opportunity for them to advance their careers. So the system is in place and it seems to be working, so we have no reason to doubt that by 2030 Veszprém will indeed be the city with the highest percentage of people making music in Hungary.

Péter Muraközy
Operative Director
VEB2023 ECoC





SOUNDPLAY

Playing music actively makes you happier. But it doesn't just increase your sense of happiness, it also helps you to live a more balanced life. And making music together brings people in a city even closer together. That's why in the VEB2023 ECoC programme we have made it a priority to involve people from infancy to old age in music, including developing music education and revitalising local music communities.

The Hangvető team, who play an important role in music education in Hungary, have been working with the city of Veszprém for a long time on various cultural and musical strategies – from conceptualisation to bidding. So it was no question that the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme would also include a music concept for cooperation. In partnership with Hangvető, we launched four projects in Veszprém and the region in the lead-up years and in the 2023 ECoC year.

SoundPlay events allowed participants – from the youngest ones to the elderly – to experience the life-changing effects of community music-making, the smile-inducing qualities of singing and drumming together. Community drumming sessions, singing circles, voice training workshops and other activities to share the joy of music, including Dani Franczia's drum circle and Bea Palya's singing workshops. Music recharges, relaxes and connects – hundreds of us experienced this at the SoundPlay events.

It is not only about enjoying music, but also about music education. The youngest children were introduced to instruments and music-making in Musical Nursery and instrument petting and learned to play the ukulele. For the older ones, Hangár Popular Music Centre in Veszprém offered professional music tuition in studios equipped with modern sound technology, under the guidance of local music professionals.

The InterUrban programme was also a joint partnership, bringing cultures from all over the world – from Japan to Estonia and Greece – all the way to Veszprém for special concerts, performances and workshops.

INTERVIEW

CITY OF MUSIC IN THE ECOC YEAR

Interview with Anna Isola

Veszprém is not only the proud holder of the title of European Capital of Culture 2023, but since 2019 it has also been a UNESCO City of Music. This is no coincidence, as the city is home to all forms of music, hosting countless concerts and musical events, and paying special attention to music education. We asked Anna Isola, Hangvető's international project manager, about her experiences over the past year.

Hangvető has many ties to Veszprém. What were your experiences in 2023 like?

Hangvető has been working with the city of Veszprém for many years. We were there for the creation of the concept of ECoC and UNESCO City of Music, and also for drafting the bids. It was wonderful to follow this process. As Hangvető, we believe that music can be a key to the development of a community, a city, and we have been able to see this in practice. For the past year we have been a proud partner of the city of Veszprém. From the community programmes of SoundPlay, InterUrban 151 and the lovely Vöröstó Games Festival, to one of the most prominent events of the year, the BALKAN: MOST Festival, we have seen a new face of the city and added new colours to its palette.

Is there anything you would highlight that you are most proud of?

If I had to highlight it, the BALKAN: MOST Festival would be the first. It was a sold-out festival, if you can say so: for 3 days, music fans and professionals flocked to the centre of Veszprém. Our motto: "The Balkans as you've never heard it before" became a reality in a music festival with 37 performers, 3 days of music and more than 7000 visitors. The musical and professional programme, in collaboration with WOMEX, was the celebratory culmination of our MOST project, supported by the Creative Europe Programme. The four-year project, led by Hangvető, was won in 2019 and aims to strengthen the Balkan music industry and build links between the Balkans and the rest of

Europe. BALKAN: MOST has brought together and expanded this professional community across Europe's borders, which has been built up over the four-year project. We are proud to have received enthusiastic feedback from both the public in Veszprém and from the profession.

What was your main objective during the programmes?

The objective of our SoundPlay project was to get more people play music in Veszprém, so that the city would be the one where most people play music actively in their daily lives, worthy of the UNESCO City of Music title. Nearly 7,000 people participated in and played music with us at the SoundPlay events, from the regular drum jamming sessions to the Kokas music sessions in nursery schools and the CityRocks event in Gyárkert (Factory'ard). It's a figure the whole city can be proud of, not just SoundPlay! It is also a good feedback that many of those who tried playing music in one of our sessions without any musical training later enrolled in Hangár music school, so that now playing music is really part of their lives. We have experienced this personally, for example, when we and the Hangár team recently applauded with excitement and pride that put parents and teachers to shame at a Hangár concert at Expresszó in November – it was so good to see the courage of some of the students performing for the first time in their lives, or those who have made audible progress since the previous term, and of course some of those who we will certainly be hearing from on the music scene. It's hard to stop listing, but we are most proud of our teachers and session leaders, who have helped to create real musical communities in Veszprém.

Looking back, is there anything about the programme that you would do differently?

It's a tough question. We see our projects as very successful, but if we could have, we would have stayed in Veszprém even more. In the planning period of 2022, we would have liked to spend more weeks getting to know our audience better, who we then of course got to know through the programmes of SoundPlay. Initially, we were unsure whether we would find the right audience for concerts, performances, writers' meet-and-greet events, but fortunately we soon got the hang of it, and so did the receptive local audience. In the context of SoundPlay, it was an exciting journey to find a way

to get such an abstract message across and to get people to take action, even encouraging them to make a lasting change in their lives by consolidating a new hobby. In other words, we didn't 'just' lure the audience to a concert, but invited them to actively participate, overcoming any anxieties they might have, any bad habits they might have about 'not being able to play music', 'not being good enough', or 'being laughed at by others'.

One of the main aims of the projects was to build community through a range of workshops and programmes. How well do you think you have achieved this?

It is difficult to highlight just a few of the positive experiences of SoundPlay, but perhaps the ones we are most proud of are our teachers and workshop participants, who have helped us to create real musical communities in Veszprém. Both the teachers and students of Hangár and the participants in the sessions have formed communities over the past two years, and although these communities operate in different ways, they share the joy of making music. That is why we hope that they will stay together after the ECoC year. During the Vöröstó Game Festival, the communities of Vöröstó and Barnag showed how to make a big deal out of local traditions and organically bring together locals and visitors without disrupting existing communities and customs. We loved playing, making music and living in the Kál Basin and in Veszprém with all our projects.

MINI CARNEGIE HALL

In autumn 2023, a special structure appeared in the downtown area of Veszprém. A mini concert hall was erected, where the youngest musical talents could showcase their skills night after night as part of the Mini Carnegie Hall programme series. Veszprém, proudly known as the City of Music, promotes the belief that playing and learning music is cool – an ethos that seems to have successfully resonated with many, judging by the performances at Mini Carnegie Hall. During the event series, we heard young music school students playing trumpet, violin and flute, all of whom exemplified Veszprém's goal of making music education and performance an integral part of everyday life.

VESZPRÉM BLUES FESTIVAL

The four-day Veszprém Blues Festival, held in April 2023, was not just a tribute to the venerable traditions of this grand genre but also showcased the vibrancy and influential power of contemporary blues and popular music. More than three dozen performers entertained blues fans, making it the biggest event of its kind in Hungary. For the first time in the country, some of the genre's undeniable giants, such as Rick Estrin & the Nightcats, Buffalo Nichols, Michelle David, Roberto Luti, Early James, and others, took the stage. The biggest sensation on the domestic scene was perhaps the reunion of Palermo Boogie Gang, who hadn't performed in 25 years but came together for this special occasion. In addition to them, Ripoff Raskolnikov, the Black Circle Orchestra and about a dozen other Hungarian bands added to the diverse lineup.

VESZPRÉM JAZZ FESTIVAL

In November 2023, Veszprém Jazz Festival filled the stages of Veszprém with jazz for four days. Iconic jazz musicians like Erik Truffaz, the emblematic trumpeter of nu jazz, Grammy-winning guitar virtuoso Bill Frisell, and the world-famous band Scary Pockets graced the stages of Hangvilla, Expresszó and Papírkutya. Alongside these big names, young Hungarian talents also had the opportunity to perform, allowing the audience to experience dozens of dimensions of jazz thanks to the diverse range of performers.

CHACONNE FESTIVAL

The chaconne is the final movement of Johann Sebastian Bach's Partita in D minor for solo violin, a term that holds significant weight in the world of music. Beyond that, a chaconne is also a musical form that spread during the Baroque era, characterised by the duality of constancy and continuous change. This universal musical form was used in nearly every genre during the Baroque

period, which inspired the festival's creation. The subtitle of the Chaconne Festival, envisioned by Pál Vikman, the classical music programme manager of VEB2023 ECoC and the festival's professional director, is aptly named: 'The Thousand Shades of Music.' The chaconne can appear in any musical style and, importantly, carries a message. We wanted to 'chaconne-ify' these many genres, moods, and styles, erasing boundaries in music, if only for a few days, to make the essential visible. The Chaconne Festival brought together early music, jazz, blues, and funk, demonstrating that a unique classical music genre never loses its relevance and can serve as a great source of inspiration for today's musicians.

INTERNATIONAL VIOLIN MAKERS' CONVENTION

Alongside the Chaconne Festival, the International Violin Makers' Convention took place in 2023, drawing master violin makers from across Europe to Veszprém to showcase their finest instruments. The event included talks by international experts, instrument exhibitions, concerts and a violin sound competition.

HUNGARIAN BALLET GRAND PRIX

In 2023, the Hungarian Ballet Grand Prix, an international ballet competition, was held at the ActiCity Dance and Movement Arts Centre. Over the course of four days, the new generation of ballet artists, aged 7 to 18, competed against each other. In addition to the competition programme, the event also featured masterclasses and workshops led by renowned ballet masters, culminating in a grand public gala. The competition's prestige was ensured by an international jury, and participants had the opportunity to showcase their skills in both professional and amateur categories, covering classical and modern ballet across three rounds. The event not only provided visibility and support for emerging talent but also helped Veszprém and the region integrate into the international dance scene.

During the lead-up to the European Capital of Culture year and throughout 2023, not only were new programmes and festivals introduced, but Veszprém's existing festivals also remained on the calendar, infused with fresh energy and exciting musical lineups.

VESZPRÉMFEST

VeszprémFest is one of Veszprém's premier music events. For over two decades, the festival has brought some of the biggest names in the international music scene to the city. The likes of Tom Jones, James Blunt, Norah Jones and Jamie Cullum have all performed here. From Portuguese fado to jazz to pop music, VeszprémFest has showcased artists from dozens of genres over the years, and this continued during the VEB2023 European Capital of Culture year.

VESZPRÉM STREET MUSIC FESTIVAL

In 2023, Street Music Festival celebrated its 24th edition, once again drawing talented street musicians and music-loving crowds to the streets of Veszprém during the European Capital of Culture year. In mid-July 2023, the downtown area of Veszprém was filled with the sound of street music. The streets were alive with singing, dancing, and carefree revelry, proving once again that Veszprém is truly a city of music. Given the special occasion, the festival brought back the best acts from previous years, with familiar performers dazzling festival-goers once more, offering concerts that crossed genre boundaries and lasted late into the night.

AUER FESTIVAL

Since 2010, Auer Festival has been honouring the legacy of the world-renowned violinist and Veszprém native, Leopold Auer. Each year, the festival features violin concerts spanning various genres. In 2023, the festival introduced audiences to the diverse

world of violin music with performances by artists such as Alexis Cárdenas and Recoveco, who played authentic Latin American melodies, Grammy-nominated lutenist Avi Avital, Grammy-winning violinist Gidon Kremer and the Franz Liszt Award-winning Corpus Trombone Quartet.

FESTIVAL OF DANCE

Since 1998, Veszprém has hosted the Festival of Dance, a Contemporary Multidisciplinary Arts Gathering. From the beginning, the festival has embraced a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating works related to contemporary dance, including photography, film, visual arts, music and literature. With the support of VEB2023 European Capital of Culture, the festival has been able to build stronger international connections since 2021. As a result, the festival now features not only Hungarian artists but also renowned international performers. In addition to standout acts like Szeged Contemporary Ballet and Máté Mészáros and his collaborating artists, the festival has also welcomed international groups such as Compagnie Belova-Iacobelli, Hiroaki Umeda and Baro d'ével.



s
Atom

resurrection
blues
Festival

SAKAI











by the forty-year penitence
that I truly spent in the desert;
ama negyvenévi Vasműre,
melyhez a évszázaban hí voltam,







VEB 2023 NAGYSZÍNPAD
MOL KADYON BALATON NAGYSZÍNPAD
CEMEX SZÍNPAD
TRUCK SHOW SZÍNPAD
AT WORKSHOP
SOUTH

STOP



THE BUSY WORLD OF VESZPRÉM

How Did I Become a Balkans Fanatic?

I'm an omnivore — at least when it comes to music. There's no genre I shy away from. However, what I listen to must be of quality; I can't tolerate junk. If the mood is right, I even enjoy the sounds of the Balkans. But I'd never fallen in love with a band from that region — until now. After the summer marathon of VeszprémFest, Street Music Festival, and Gyárkert (Factory'ard), I felt like I could do with a break after the never-ending nights. But Balázs Weyer, the head of the Hangvető programme team at the European Capital of Culture (ECoC), warned me that I would be making a big mistake if I skipped the 'Balkan: Most Festival' in early September. Plus, my son showed me a YouTube video of Dubioza Kolektiv, one of the bands featured on the festival posters. Although I didn't become an instant fan, I decided to go because Trinity Square is a fantastic venue for any good music, and the company promised to be great, so I was expecting a night of chatting and conversation.

I arrived at the Castle just as Dubioza Kolektiv — known in Hungarian as 'Gyanús Társaság' — took the stage. The Balkans boys didn't waste a second on acclimatisation: they immediately blew up Trinity Square. The crowd jumped into the air and stayed there for the next hour and a half. I couldn't get back down either, and the thought of talking to anyone didn't even cross my mind. It felt like I was riding a wild horse with no chance for conversation. The Bosnians were incredible. Walking home, I thought about how little we in Central and Eastern Europe know about each other and how little we expect from one another. Yet, there's so much potential within us. ECoC has broadened my horizons and improved my stamina. If anyone doubts that sport is a part of culture, they should attend a Dubioza Kolektiv concert. The next day's muscle soreness speaks for itself.

Gyula Porga
Mayor of Veszprém





OFF-SEASON

Off-Season is about fringe, emerging performers, and creation. It's about how a fantasy novel, a crime series, or the latest song by Pogány Induló can lead you to Dostoevsky or Krisztina Tóth. And, of course, the reverse is true as well: starting with Pilinszky, you can arrive at a Platon Karataev lyrics or even a line from your own poem. We created the festival together with young people from Veszprém to bring cultural life into the off-season of February.

Launched in 2022 in Veszprém, this event series is unique even on a national level. It focusses on the fringes of literature (crime, fantasy, sci-fi, comics, lyrics) and emerging performers. Additionally, the events are held not in traditional literary venues but in clubs, concert halls and pubs — specifically, in some of Veszprém's most popular and iconic locations like Expresszó, Papírkutya, TEREM and Íródeák. Over the past few years, we have hosted dozens of programmes featuring the most prominent figures of contemporary literature and music, as well as up-and-coming young talents — from Zoltán Beck to Krisztián GreCsó, from Dani Varró to concerts based on the works of Dezső Tandori, from comic-drawing workshops to theatre performances. We've watched experimental theatre productions, immersed ourselves in rhymes at slam poetry nights, and even launched new POKET books.

Thanks to the festival's success, a smaller sibling event, 'Season,' was born, bringing the most progressive theatre, literary, and musical programmes to the Veszprém audience during the summer of 2022 and 2023. At this free festival, we welcomed performers like Platon Karataev and Analog Balaton, discussed the world dominated by streaming, browsed the best records at a vinyl market, and repeatedly confirmed just how much literature surrounds us.

INTERVIEW

NO OFF-SEASON OR SEASON WITHOUT PLATON KARATAEV

Interview with Gergely Balla, the Band's Frontman

Platon Karataev has performed at several VEB2023 ECoC events, making them regular guests at various occasions, such as the Off-Season and Season festivals. We spoke with the band's frontman, Gergely Balla, about their experiences over the years and their connection to Lake Balaton.

Literature and your band are inseparable, as the band's name comes from a character in Tolstoy's work. Why did you choose this name, and does the writer or his character influence Platon Karataev's music and lyrics?

Gergely Balla: Although he is just a minor character in a vast, flowing novel, I think Platon Karataev plays a very important role in War and Peace. He's a muzhik, a Russian peasant who, in his simple and sincere way, touches upon great truths. We strive for this simplicity and sincerity as well, hoping to capture some of these timeless wisdoms.

Speaking of Off-Season, how does contemporary literature – and its frontiers – play a role in your life?

For me, world literature and the writings from various traditions are almost daily influences, and I also try to keep up with contemporary Hungarian literature. Authors and poets like Gyöngyi Hegedűs, Tamás Halmi, Ákos Győrffy, Attila Jász and Imre Oravecz are part of a very rich pool of talent, especially considering that Hungary is a small country and literature tends to be somewhat on the cultural periphery.

During the ECoC year, audiences could often meet you in Veszprém and the surrounding area. Beyond that, what ties you to the

Veszprém, Bakony and Lake Balaton region, and what does the area mean to you personally?

I spent every summer of my childhood at Lake Balaton, so I have many fond memories of this part of the country. I also spent a few days at Bakonybél Monastery during a time when I really needed it, and it gave me a lot. The ECoC has deepened our connection with the region; I've had countless experiences here, including the previous Off-Season Festivals, Inota — which might be the most progressive innovation in the Hungarian festival scene in the past decade — and the József Attila evening at Margaret ruins with Miklós Vecsei H., all of which are wonderful memories.

JUTAS CIRCLE

Our fundamental idea in creating the Jutas Circle was to establish exciting, liveable spaces that the local residents would be happy to embrace.

We envisioned a neighborhood where locals feel that the streets and parks are their own. A place where families gather on Saturday afternoons. A place where grandmothers can take a stroll with their grandchildren after school during the week. A place where young people can be together, free and safely, whether on skateboards or just sitting on benches, solving the problems of the world.

It all began with community planning: countless surveys, numerous interviews with residents and discussions led by architects, urban planners and community developers. Together with the locals, we drew up on the planning board our vision for the future of the district. This is how the 3.5-kilometre Jutas Running Track was laid out, and how the new functional maps of Táborállás Park, Kálvin János Park, and the park in front of Deák Ferenc Primary School were formed, turning these old-new community spaces into areas with a renewed purpose.

But of course, construction isn't just about placing benches, repairing pavements or renovating playgrounds. Building together with the locals was a much greater and more important activity — so that neighbours could become a real community.

In the end, three main lines were established: a community space named Jutas Hub, a series of community events where residents could take over the spaces and relax—this was the Jutas Picnic and Olympics and the Jutas Mini-Picnics series — and finally, a programme centred around community circus activities — this was CirKollektív and Cirkuládé.

JUTAS COMMUNITY HUB

We envisaged the Jutas Community Hub as a special community space that could engage the micro-communities of the housing estate: music classes for toddlers, LEGO clubs for both children and adults, educational talks and family workshop series... In other words, we imagined it as a venue for programmes that cater to all age groups and facilitate connections.

We began constructing the elements of Jutas Community Hub in 2021, and over the years, we expanded the possibilities. We took over the Jutas area with outdoor yoga, Nordic walking tours, nursery and school fence drawing competitions, chalk drawing contests, photo and sound collection calls and community games built around these activities.

JUTAS PICNIC AND OLYMPICS

The core idea behind the Jutas Picnic and Olympics was to create an event where Jutas residents could meet, relax and experience new things, perhaps for the first time. We wanted to put on a weekend where staircase communities could come together as teams and compete, where stilt walkers, acrobats, professional and amateur jugglers would be everywhere, where street theatre productions would pop up around corners, and perhaps even a tightrope walker would balance between buildings. Table football and ping pong tables lined up under the shade of trees, chess tournaments were held on benches, a climbing wall was built for the brave, and skilled players rotated at the teqball tables. One of the key elements of community building, sharing meals, was also part of the programme, so we organised a picnic where we sat down together at the tables and simply enjoyed each other's company over delicious food.

JUTAS MINI PICNICS

In 2022 and 2023, alongside Jutas Picnic, we also held Jutas Mini Picnics in the area. The Mini Picnics allowed us to get into the spirit of Jutas Picnic with programmes like circus workshops, juggling lessons, musical experiences, acrobatic activities and community painting. In July 2023, during one of these Mini Picnics, the audience was treated to a special performance: an interdisciplinary production entitled 'Beyond the Hills of Veszprém' by the French troupe 'Le Plus Petit Cirque Du Monde.' This collaborative production with artists from Veszprém and Timișoara brought together contemporary circus artists, dancers, puppet theatre artists and musicians specialising in Eastern music, offering a memorable experience for all of us.

JUTAS COMMUNITY CIRCUS: CIRKOLLEKTÍV AND CIRKULÁDÉ

The transformative power of the circus lies in the intersection of education, movement arts and community experience. Community circus is much more than teaching and showcasing circus tricks and acts; it teaches discipline, builds self-confidence, fosters community, sparks creativity, and thus becomes a tool for artistic self-expression. When designing Jutas community spaces and programmes, it was important to help build the groups and communities that have formed there, offering new experiences and insights to those who are open to them. The circus creates a common language and theme and has the unique ability to involve us not just as spectators but as active participants.

This is why we brought a special digital circus performance, Cirquart interactive experience circus, which used QR codes to show the extraordinary feats we could perform ourselves while walking around the Jutas housing estate.

The other element of the community circus was Kabóca Puppet Theatre's 'Cirkuládé,' through which families, schools, and nursery children living in Jutas could actively engage with the puppet theatre. Puppet theatre is a diverse multidisciplinary art form that can engage children and adults alike. In the Cirkuládé events, actors and puppeteers became acrobats and jugglers, manipulating giant puppets, all coming together into a single swirling street theatre spectacle, a delightful marketplace attraction. The performances in the circus-like Cirkuládé tent, where giant puppets brought Lake Balaton's aquatic creatures to life, were featured at the Jutas Mini Picnics, the Jutas Picnic and Olympics and Kabóciádé Family Festival.

VOLUNTEERING: THE SHINIES

One of our initial goals was the desire to bring about change in Veszprém and the region in the field of volunteering. From the very beginning, we aimed to help local residents get involved in the VEB2023 European Capital of Culture (ECoC) events and to familiarise the organisations operating in the area with the culture of volunteering. To this end, VEB2023 ECoC strived to attract as many volunteers as possible to Veszprém from the region and even from abroad. The target number of volunteers registered for the programme was 500, which was reached by the end of 2023, with 501 registered participants. In 2023, a total of 122 volunteers participated in the events, contributing a combined 3,243 hours, thus becoming a vibrant part of the cultural season's programmes.

Since 2020, thanks to the activities of the 'Shinies' volunteer team, residents have felt a personal connection to the VEB2023 ECoC programme's key cultural events, which have had a lasting impact on the city and the region. One of our important goals was for the organisations hosting the volunteers to work more consciously and systematically, ensuring that even after 2023, an approach and practice would remain that would benefit both the organisations operating in the region and the residents interested in volunteering.

Another goal of the volunteer programme was to establish a sustainable and well-functioning online volunteer management system in the Veszprém–Bakony–Balaton region. After more than a year and a half of development, this system was launched and is available on the website online.helloragyogok.hu. The system allows organisations and projects in the region to manage their volunteers within reliable professional frameworks over the long term. On the website, host organisations can post and advertise their own projects for which they seek volunteers. In addition, volunteers and regional partners can also register on the platform, creating a community space where active volunteers can easily find cultural events and organisations that support volunteering.

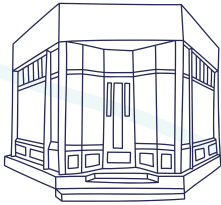
STREET MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Street Management programme is a project aimed at building big-city (self-)consciousness by initiating and supporting enterprises that, due to Veszprém's size and perceived or real provincialism, involve financial risks in their launch. However, once realised, these ventures create an inexplicably positive memory for artists, tourists, professional visitors, and wanderers who visit Veszprém, which in turn promotes the viral spread of our 'Veszprém, the Centre of the World' campaign. Moreover, by making everyday life more liveable, it ensures that we, the people of Veszprém, can be even prouder and can anchor our young people here, because who would want to move away from a place that everyone desires to be in?

As part of the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme, several new hospitality venues and shops have opened in Veszprém's city centre in recent years, revitalising the area around Old Town Square and the daily life of the city. Through the Street Management Programme, businesses have been given the opportunity to integrate into the daily life of Veszprém, each contributing to the creation and strengthening of communities in the city over a glass of wine, a cup of coffee or a delicious meal.



SAIKO NO SUSHI
RESTAURANT & BAR



KUNSZT!

BISTRO & DESIGN SHOP



LOHONYAY
RESTAURANT



ABLAK A BABLAK
VEGAN RESTAURANT



MIMOSA
CAFÉ & BAR



FÜGE

ICE CREAM COURTYARD AND CAFÉ



PEKEDLI
UTILITY STORE

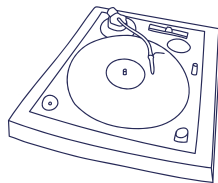


PAPÍRKUTYA
CULTURE BISTRO



DERCE
DAIRY & BAKERY

WINE & VINYL
BAR | STORE





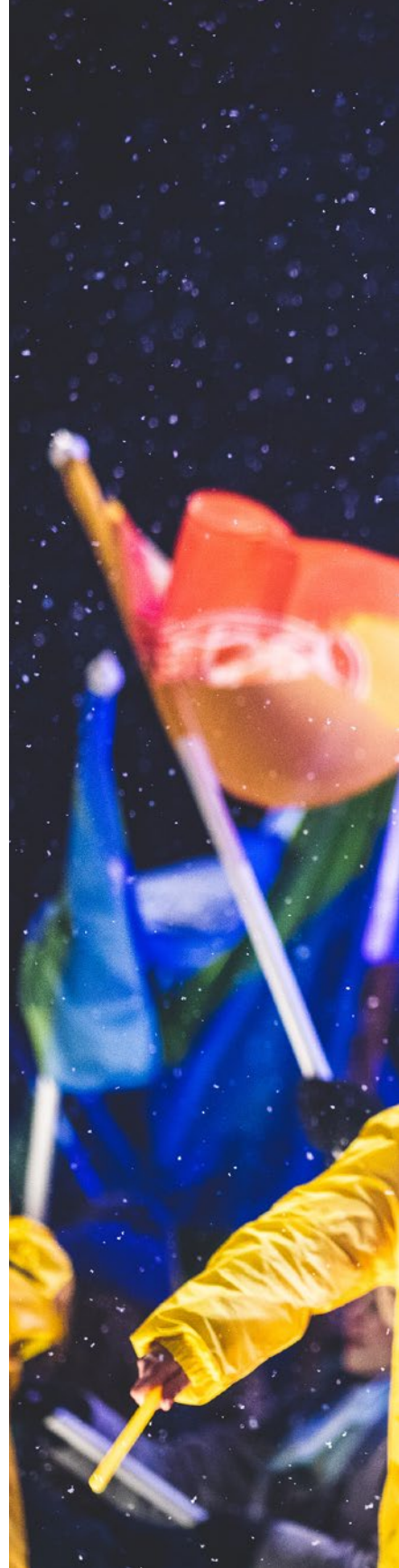














ÖNKER
WOL

REGION, ALIVE

In 2023, the Bakony-Balaton region reached out to the public through the community-building and identity-forming power of culture. The central question was whether it is possible, primarily through cultural mediation and by emphasising the importance of human capital, to showcase, shape and make exceptional the landscape that represents home to us. We sought answers to this question by engaging with those whose work has made it likely that the Bakony-Balaton region will turn towards the future as a distinguished cultural and artistic area.

A significant challenge was how to present the diverse traditions and attributes of 116 settlements as a unified regional identity, creating a shared locality and supporting collective development. Through numerous cultural capacity-building projects —coordinating microregional collaborations (e.g. the Lesence area), initiating the creation of cultural networks focussed on processes (e.g. the Pajta (Barn) Programme involving thirty settlements), assisting in scaling existing cultural offerings and local creative communities (e.g. the CultNet Programme involving eleven creative communities), supporting the establishment of knowledge bases and digital archives (e.g. Land P/reservation), tracing less visible local traditions (e.g. Jásd Elderberry House), or creating opportunities for cultural access (e.g. Romani for Berhida) — we collectively developed potential frameworks and models for cultural integration over the years.

If I must highlight examples and moments from a complex professional programme with my own biases, I would emphasise contemporary artistic achievements in unusual places and contexts. For instance, how a choral work was performed through the collaborative process of music-loving communities at St. Maurice's Monastery in Bakonybél and a world-renowned Baroque ensemble. What inspired painter Bukta Imre and his talented colleagues at a summer open university in Vöröstó. The song written by Beck Zoli with the students of Badacsonytördemic. How world-famous jazz trumpeter Erik Truffaz and János Vázsonyi found a common voice in a quarry in Salföld. How Forte Company's theatrical project in Pécsely became part of, and integral to, village life. How Modern Art Orchestra's jazz world captivated the community of the church in Vászoly. These experiences and the encounters between invitees and invited are difficult to put into words, but for those who experienced them, I believe they are memorable and exemplary. They attest to the fact that modernity's forms are always local and that contemporary art, if authentic, can address everyone and anyone beyond any elitism.

I hope that in the past year, we have managed to lay the foundations of an integration model that has opened up unique, previously unknown dimensions and possibilities of a Bakony-Balaton identity within the distinguished medium of culture, and that it will remain influential in the future.

Krisztián Nagy

Project Leader, CultNet and Pajta (Barn) Programmes
VEB2023 ECoC





CULTNET

CultNet is a network of locations where local creative communities can connect. VEB2023 European Capital of Culture supported multidisciplinary art programmes through calls for applications to regional settlements. CultNet bases primarily focus on artistic achievements and creative communities that offer glimpses behind the scenes of art and, at times, involve the audience radically in the creative process. Our goal was to create opportunities for free artistic creation. Over the years, CultNet venues have engaged numerous creative communities and provided hundreds of people with insights into the operations of these locations and their artists. CultNet aimed to create a community-building experience through art and collaborative creation and also set a significant goal of providing cultural opportunities throughout the year, not just for a few months.

On invitation from Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture, eleven artistic communities in the villages of the Bakony-Balaton region joined the CultNet programme. In the region's more remote settlements, they sought places and collaborations with artists who invite us into the finer worlds of contemporary art and demonstrate the connective power of art from an unusual proximity.

The uniqueness of the CultNet programme lies in the fact that it is not primarily an artistic event but rather offers opportunities leading to it, like training, joint learning, and initiation, closely and more personally connected to individual concerts, exhibitions, theatrical performances, and, not least, the artists who create them.

The connection is not only more intense than usual between the audience and the artist but also initially established between local creators and invited guest artists. These encounters help in getting to know each other's artistic (and non-artistic) worlds, spending time together and collaborating, which supports the medium-term development of artistic communities.

The bases mostly implemented interdisciplinary processes and events, but local characteristics and specific interests always highlighted a particular genre or activity that initiated shared thinking between host and guest. As a result, the 2023 CultNet programme bases can be best understood in terms of four themes.

Szent Mauríciusz Monastery
Bakonybél



International Artists' Colony
Magyarpolány



Jelenrét
Hegyess



Csigó Mill
Gyulakeszi



Édenkert Porta
Vöröstó



Káli Kapocs
Mindszentkál



Bánya
Salföld



Kisbirtok CultBase
Zánka



SKIZO Winery
Badacsonytördemic



Babel Camp
Balatonboglár



CultHouse
Pécsely



CULTNET BASES 2023

THEATRE: LOCAL, RURAL, ON THE ROAD AND EMERGING

In Pécsely, Magyarpolány and Hegyesd, CultNet's theatre projects focussed on uncovering the life story and works of György Bodosi, who wrote under a penname, with the leadership of Forte Company; Emőke Kiss-Végh and Tamás Ördög's travelling theatre, shaped by the experiences of the summer spent in Hegyesd; and flash theatre in Magyarpolány with the mentorship of Kitty Kéri and Bence Móczár. The materials for the performances were drawn from local memory, attracting everything and everyone that is not theatre.

CLASSICAL MUSIC SANCTUARIES

In Bakonybél and Gyulakeszi, a part of our musical culture opened up that seems to be accessible only in the famous institutions of large cities. In August, the world-renowned Munich Bach Chamber Choir was a guest of St. Maurice's Choir in Bakonybél; at Csigó Mill, we could explore the boundaries of music and architecture with Gábor Zoboki and music and brain research with Tamás Freund, as well as attend masterclasses by Ingrid Kertesi and Éva Csermák. We prepared for receiving music with listening sessions, presentations and initiation courses.

VISUAL ARTS, UP CLOSE

From evening schools to open universities, underground photography to digital culture, action painting to collaborative sculpture building, each base was committed to cultural education through a multitude of educational programmes.

In Vöröstó, Éden Porta hosted Imre Bukta and friends' artists' colony and the related open university; in Hegyesd, artists grouped around Attila Ménesi developed models of participatory

culture; Babel Camp in Boglár pursued the contemporary traces of neo-avant-garde heritage; Magyarpolány had a metal sculpture artist colony; at the Salföld Quarry, Miklós Déri's special photo project and Béla Raffay's sculpture courses were revealed to us; and in Gyulakeszi, Gábor Áron's Open Studio series hosted Villa Biener Arte Contemporanea from Northern Italy. At CultNet bases, visual arts meant the art of learning to see, where we could encounter contemporary forms and artists with unusual intensity and personal proximity.

POPULAR MUSIC PROVINCES

In Mindszentkállya, Zánka, Badacsonytördemic and Salföld, various introductory programmes in popular music were implemented, teaching self-expression and inviting participants into more refined musical worlds with the presence of prominent genres and underground artistic figures. At Káli-kapocs, there were blues concerts and workshops, an acoustic open-air museum, and the Neon Museum; in Zánka's Kisbirtok, street art and improvisational music met with the stories of the village's residents; Zoli Beck and the Zajzajzaj (Noisenoisenoise) community engaged the students of the local art school on the terrace of the Skizo Cellar in Tördemic; and at the Bánya (MINE), the world-renowned guest of János Vázsonyi's jazz series was Erik Truffaz.

At the 11 CultNet bases, artist friends, actors and painters, musicians and collectors, locals and masters met to offer opportunities for connection, wonder, and unique experiences across a range of fields: from charcoal drawings to classical music, creative industries to jazz, poetry to the underground — available to everyone and anyone.

PAJTA (BARN) PROGRAMME

The motto of the Pajta (BARN) Programme, “Culture: locally”, perfectly sums up the mission of the Pajta (Barn) sites in the region: to help small communities access cultural services that are important and relevant to their local needs, and to expand the cultural offer. From the outset, the Pajta (Barn) Programme has supported the proactive efforts of local cultural institutions and civil society organisations to develop cultural capacities, emphasising the importance of personalities and personal connections.

Modern Barns, far from the hustle and bustle of tourism, are mini-hubs for local cultural life, which are a stimulus for the shaping of tastes and innovation as homes of contemporary culture, taste, tradition and innovation, linking contemporary cultural values with the spirit of place.

The Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme has supported applications from 3 municipalities in 2021 and 14 in 2022; by 2023, the Barns community grew to 28 municipalities.



PAJTA (BARN) PROGRAMME MUNICIPALITIES IN 2023

PARTNERS ABOUT THE PAJTA (BARN) PROGRAMME

“At the height of the Tés Plateau, the fresh air inspires new ideas; here, even the sun seems to shine brighter. Our cultural values are inspired by the unique environment of the Bakony. Our traditions are stable fundamental values that we can confidently build upon. Our mission is to bring culture to the local area, blending various art forms with tradition-keeping to create engaging activities across generations.”

István Fodor-Bödös, Tés

“The Páhok Kapo(l)cs Creative House aimed to become a home for taste-shaping, living tradition, and innovation. The main community goal of the project was to allow people of all ages and abilities to experience the sense of unity and creative work done within the community through diverse value-communicating cultural activities.”

Anita Nagy, Alsópáhok

“We believe in meaningful encounters: by building on our traditions, we create new programmes, establish new traditions and strengthen human connections.”

Péter Bárány, Hidegkút

“We strengthen the relationship between Roma and non-Roma residents of the settlement with fresh, dynamic cultural experiences that primarily involve young people.”

Edit Szabó Posza, Somogyzentpál

“Parókia (Parish) Coworking has become a ‘third place’ community centre, primarily providing small community programmes for the local residents.”

Tamás Horváth, Káptalantóti, Parókia Coworking

“We are convinced that the programmes of the Pajta in Balatonhenye were able to forge a community out of the residents of Balatonhenye and its surroundings, creating a base of participants and viewers that will support the development of further interactive community events even after the programme year, while also encouraging local community engagement beyond occasional cultural consumption.”

Róbert Markó, Balatonhenye

“We can also view it as a process of self-discovery at the community level, as through the programmes, we got to know a different, more honest and exciting face of Dörgicse.”

Luca Veres, Dörgicse

“Our most famous monuments, the heart-shaped gravestones, not only inspired artists but also serve as mottos for our association’s activities. Our goal was to connect traditions and the values of the past with contemporary art and scientific knowledge, thereby aiding community building.”

Andrea Varga, Balatonudvari

“The aim of the five Nivegy Valley settlements is to invigorate cultural life while preserving our traditions and identity. Our programmes were presented within the framework of gentle tourism, as we wanted to showcase this lovely landscape to future generations. As a result of the project, new communities with a shared vision and a desire to contribute to the valley have emerged, advancing step by step with mutual support along the path of development.”

Éva Varga-Szabó (Nivegy Valley: Balatoncsicsó, Óbudavár, Tagyon, Szentantalfa, Szentjakabfa)

“Our goal was to build a community out of both the long-standing and newly settled residents of the village. We didn’t want local traditions to be completely forgotten, so we rejuvenated them in a creative way to ensure that the programmes we envisioned would be sufficiently motivating for all age groups.”

Ilona S. Hegyi, Lókút

“The planned programme reinforced our plans that we outlined during the community planning process. It stabilised the operation of the communities and allowed for the implementation of new programme elements, such as artistic productions, which brought a new dimension to our programme offer. It organically connected local culture with the expectations of tourism events.”

Tibor Hoffner, Taliándörögd

REGIONAL SHOW

We asked the centres of our region's districts to come up with an event that would make the year 2023 memorable for everyone living there. Some envisioned something new, some put a unique twist on existing festivals, and some imagined a big splash, while others preferred two smaller events. However, the goal was the same in every case: to provide experiences for the audience.

AJKA ART CITY, AJKA

In 2023, the world's first krypton factory reopened its doors in the heart of Ajka's tree-lined district, where music and light shows filled the vast industrial-style spaces. To mark the occasion, stars who had left Ajka returned home, and opera singers, actors, musicians and artists gave spontaneous joint performances with local art groups, offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse. Visitors to Ajka enjoyed folk dance and rock and roll, wild and fish dishes reviving the traditions of the Bakony region, 70s and 80s nostalgia with Miners' Day, and street art performances filling the downtown spaces. There was even a Superman meetup at the krypton factory.

BALATON FILM MUSIC FESTIVAL AND ALMÁDI LOCALS' DAY, BALATONALMÁDI

On the last weekend of August 2023, a three-day festival featured symphonic and chamber orchestras performing some of the most exciting Hungarian and international film scores of all time. During these days, film music-themed concerts were held at three different locations.

Almádi Locals' Day was also part of the Regional Show, where Almádi communities — groups of friends, organisations, and families — could spend a fulfilling day with a cooking competition, delicious food and drinks and good music.

18TH ROMANTIC REFORM ERA AND ANNA BALL AND ANNA FESTIVAL, BALATONFÜRED

In 2023, Balatonfüred hosted the Romantic Reform Era Festival, where traditionalists dressed in period costumes paraded through the city, immersing us in Hungarian traditions within a grand cultural event. Concerts, craft fairs, book presentations and dance performances awaited the attendees.

In July 2023, the 198th Anna Ball, one of the country's most significant society events, took place in Balatonfüred's Reform Era district. The ball has slowly become a symbol of romance and elegance over nearly two hundred years. The pre-ball Anna Festival in June allowed us to evoke the era of dance song festivals, with styles, costumes and live performances bringing the 1950s to 70s back to Füred's Reform Era district.

EARTH – WATER – AIR, FONYÓD

Water, earth and air are central elements in all our lives, yet we often forget their importance and the necessity of preserving them. As part of the Regional Show, Fonyód joined with an event series focussing on environmental protection and the importance of sustainable living.

KESZTHELYFEST 2023 – SAVE THE DATE! A FOUR-DAY MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTS FESTIVAL BY LAKE BALATON

In the summer of 2023, KeszthelyFest took place for the ninth time. The free event series aims to offer a truly entertaining and lasting experience for both locals and tourists by blending various music styles, gastronomy, humour, literature, history and fashion.

HELIKON FESTIVITIES 2023 – THE FESTIVAL OF ENCOUNTERS, KESZTHELY

Hungary's biggest secondary school talent festival in 2023 broke out of its usual framework with an unconventional approach. The most successful competition performances and schools of recent

years were showcased alongside artists and star performers who had participated in past Helikon festivals and have since achieved fame. The event also featured experts and creators who have served on juries over the years, as well as artistic groups and local creative communities associated with them.

EUROFOLK FESTIVAL – ON THE PATH OF NATIONS WITH DANCE, MARCALI

The Nations Festival was a four-day event showcasing the culture and heritage of various nations through the participation of Hungarian and European dancers and musicians. Visitors could explore different traditions through exhibitions, dance parades, barn dancing and stage performances, and even take part in an international dance competition.

SIÓFOK55, SIÓFOK

In 2023, the 55th anniversary of Siófok’s receiving town status was celebrated. On this occasion, the city hosted a four-day event series for its residents and visitors. The programmes focussed on preserving and passing on local historical and cultural values, with artistic events, exhibitions, book presentations, barn dancing, concerts and programmes for children and families.

BAROCK – FLINT FESTIVAL, SÜMEG

The “Barock” Festival was created in the spirit of blending tradition and modernity. In July 2023, the town was imbued with the spirit of the Baroque era, set against the backdrop of the Episcopal Palace, the Castle and the Franciscan Church. In addition to musical experiences, festival-goers could immerse themselves in history with a knightly tournament providing a taste of the Turkish era. Complementary elements included fire jugglers (an ancient type of ‘magic’) and light painting (a modern type of ‘magic’).

TAPOLCA FESTIVE DAYS, TAPOLCA

For over a decade, Tapolca Festival Days have been the biggest party at the end of summer in Tapolca. The event has traditionally featured a festival atmosphere, gastronomy and musical and dance performances, and this will continue in the future. In 2023, the event celebrated cultural diversity and was expanded with numerous programmes as part of the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) year.

10TH DAVID POPPER INTERNATIONAL CELLO COMPETITION, VÁRPALOTA

Over the past 22 years, the whole world – from Denmark to Australia, and from America to South Korea – has come to know where Várpalota and Hungary are located. The best cellists from Hungary and around the world compete in Várpalota on their path to success, judged by an internationally recognised jury of cellists. The competition, noted by professional audiences worldwide, held its anniversary event in 2023.

ROCK PALOTA FESTIVAL, VÁRPALOTA

In May 2023, Thury Castle hosted the country’s largest amateur rock music festival. The castle, transformed into a rock palace, featured performances by bands such as Alvin és a Mókusok, Aurora and Bikini, along with numerous garage bands that rocked the stage for rock fans.

ZIRCIKON, ZIRC

In August 2023, ZircIkon festival was held in Zirc, in the heart of the Bakony region, offering free programmes for the public. Attendees could enjoy concerts, fairy tale performances, craft workshops and a vintage car show.

INTERVIEW

A LOOK BACK ON THE 2023 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE YEAR

Regional Show: When the District Centres of the Bakony-Balaton Region Shone

In 2023, the 11 district centres of the Bakony-Balaton region showcased their cultural diversity through events organised as part of the Regional Show. What were the goals behind this grand series of events and what was it all about? We reflect on the programme with Henriette Gere, regional coordinator of the VEB2023 European Capital of Culture (ECoC), in a brief conversation.

What was the goal of the Regional Show?

The overarching goal of the programme series was to expand the diversity and European dimension of the cultural offer, broaden access to and participation in culture, enhance the performance of the cultural sector and its connection to other sectors and strengthen the international image of Veszprém and the surrounding region. We aimed for each district centre to hold at least one major cultural event in 2023 under the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme that would provide a true ECoC experience for both local and regional residents as well as visiting tourists. Eleven district centres joined the Regional Show — specifically, Ajka, Balatonalmádi, Balatonfüred, Fonyód, Keszthely, Marcali, Siófok, Sümeg, Tapolca, Várpalota and Zirc. These towns are cultural hubs of our region, each with its own distinct personality and a rich cultural heritage. Through the Regional Show, they all had the opportunity to showcase what they could offer to their communities and visitors.

How can such a series of events boost the cultural vibrancy of a region?

Each event provided a unique opportunity for the cities to showcase their rich cultural and architectural heritage, bring together different generations, unite their residents and visitors, honour the past and create value for future cultural consumers. Regarding the Regional Show, we had a few requirements, like as ensuring that the events organised by the towns conveyed cultural value and that they engaged the local and regional audience.

Could such an initiative continue beyond the ECoC year?

I am fortunate to have been involved in the cooperation between VEB2023 ECoC and the towns almost from the beginning, so I was also part of the process when each town decided to form a strong alliance with the VEB2023 ECoC organisers and participate in our initiative with their innovative and unconventional programmes. Our goals were clear from the start: to make 2023 a year of celebration and to bring culture closer to everyone. However, we never envisaged this effort as a short-term achievement; we wanted to initiate and strengthen long-term processes that would extend well beyond the ECoC year. The programme supported many regional initiatives precisely because we recognised the ambition and drive that characterise the organisers in our region's towns, especially the district centres. I believe that when a region can achieve such a high level of cooperation as we saw with the Regional Show, it fulfils one of the key goals of the European Capital of Culture: to bring people and communities closer together through culture.

KŐFESZT

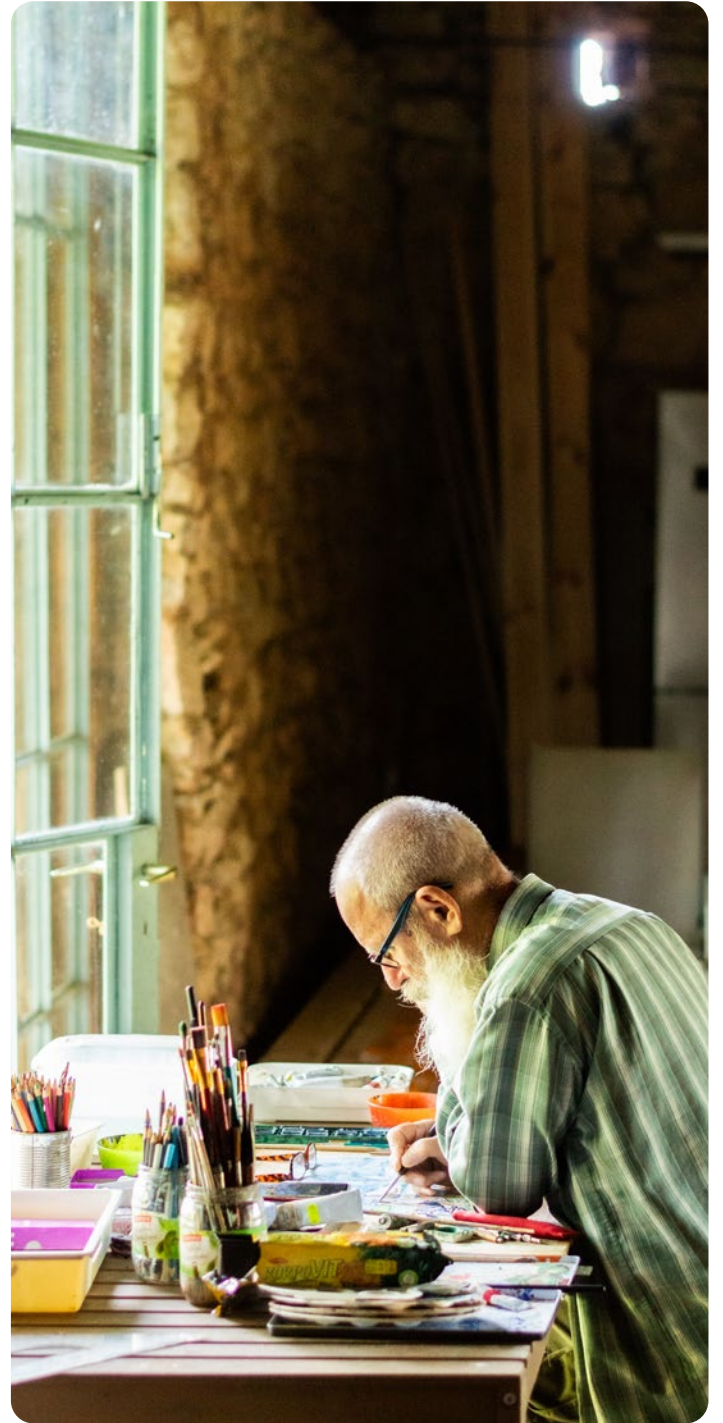
Kőfeszt is the biggest multidisciplinary arts festival in the Kál Basin, and it is strengthened monthly by the Kőfeszt Folk Club and the Whitsun Kőfeszt – Free Barn Dancing along with its accompanying programmes, to establish the Kál Basin as the centre of Hungarian folklore and Kőfeszt as a celebration of folk art. The programmes, meticulously curated based on quality, are evenly distributed among the 10 participating locations: events are held just as much at the beach in Pálköve as they are in a courtyard or church in Kővágóörs, a village proud of its three churches. The events of Kőfeszt are always free, as they fulfil a sort of mission. It is crucial and defining that it provides space for local communities and creators, and its programme does not require language proficiency, making it fully enjoyable for international guests as well. The emphasis is truly on tranquillity: here, the focus is not on entertainment for its own sake, but rather on conversation, getting to know and respect each other, and shared learning. Alongside carefree enjoyment, the events appeal to anyone from 0 to 88 years old and offer an opportunity for generations to relax together.











FRAGILE LAKE BALATON

As we prepared for the projects of the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme, it was evident that the word 'Balaton' in the title is a commitment, as it represents the most prominent identity-forming element of the region. Lake Balaton is not only an emblematic natural treasure of the region but of all of Hungary, a natural and cultural phenomenon that Vera Schleicher, an ethnographer specialising in Lake Balaton, rightly calls a 'national joy.' Lake Balaton and the landscape surrounding it is a reflection of our history and present, and its fate is closely linked with the past, present and future of the region and of Hungary. Its well-being is our common concern, and its vulnerability is our shared responsibility. Therefore, we decided to approach Lake Balaton not just with the enthusiasm traditionally used to celebrate the landscape, but with a genuine interest in its natural and cultural ecosystem. We aim to reflect on its values, draw attention to its fragility and raise awareness that the responsibility for this national joy rests on all of us. Collaborating with numerous organisations, institutions, artists, scientists and professionals, the Fragile Lake Balaton projects were created in this spirit, and we hope that they will become sources of inspiration, which will continue to ripple out in the future, contributing to the strengthening of social responsibility regarding the vulnerability of Lake Balaton.

Can Togay

Chief Artistic and Creative Adviser
VEB2023 ECoC





BALATORIUM

There are very few people who do not feel a deep emotional connection to this unique natural and social phenomenon, landscape and culture. Central Europe's largest lake, undeniably one of Hungary's most important regions, is shaped by countless factors and lies at the intersection of numerous interests. From plankton to investors, from reed beds to holidaymakers, from fish to sailors, from locals to new residents and from ecologists to beach operators, every stakeholder has their own perspective when it comes to Lake Balaton.

But how aware are we of the complex interconnections within this sensitive ecosystem? Do we truly know our lake and the landscape to which we are so attached, and can we, aside from our individual interests, recognise our common interests?

It was with these questions in mind that the VEB2023 programme defined the BALATORIUM series as a key project, examining the region's ecological issues and addressing them with the tools of art and education.

BALATORIUM ECOLOGICAL X CULTURAL WEEK

One of the important milestones of the Balatorium project was the ecological event series held in 2022 and 2023 — known as Balatorium Ecological x Cultural Week. The goal was to discuss the ecological issues affecting the lake through cultural programmes in an educational, informative and entertaining way with the help of experts and the public. The programme included workshops, discussions, 'slow walks' (slow-paced explorations of the landscape) and artistic actions. We also held educational events to show children how to care for Lake Balaton and its environment, tasted the lake's delicacies at an algae bar and participated in thought-provoking discussions with experts.

BALATORIUM X EDUCATION

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME) developed playful educational programmes reflecting on Lake Balaton's ecological themes, specifically aimed at the 14-18 age group, involving their students and instructors in connection with the Balatorium programme. These courses led to the creation of a board game, the development of an educational toolkit and related teacher training for secondary school educators as well as interactive school programmes in collaboration with the Bakony-Balaton Environmental Education Centre Association.

Through the analysis and visual processing of data related to Lake Balaton's ecology, students created art and design projects using data visualisation tools. During their summer construction camp, they built an installation on the shores of Lake Balaton, designed by the students of MOME's Institute of Architecture.

ARTISTIC RESIDENCY PROGRAMMES

The artistic residency programmes associated with the Balatorium project attracted both Hungarian and international visual artists in 2022 and 2023. In the first year, artists such as Péter Mátyási, Ádám Ulbert, Fuzzy Earth (Tekla Gedeon & Sebastian Gschanes), Anders Ehlin & Selma Boskailo and Marie Ouazzani & Nicolas Carrier conducted research and found inspiration at the Balaton Limnological Research Institute. The works created by these artists, inspired by the knowledge gained during the residency, were showcased in the summer of 2023 during Balatorium Ecological x Cultural Week.

In 2023, the residency programme was re-announced, this time in collaboration with the Balaton Uplands National Park. The artists focussed on the catchment areas of Lake Balaton, the connective power of water across landscapes and the circulatory system of our natural waters. After participating in slow landscape explorations, professional discussions and scientific workshops, the artists presented their works inspired by Lake Balaton in a collective exhibition. The exhibition entitled 'Troubled Waters' was held at House of Arts Veszprém and featured works by Ana Brotas, Balázs Budai & Balázs Virág, Collectif Trouble (Jeanne Astrup-Chauvaux & Garance Maurer & Mathilde Dewavrin), Ernst Calla Bettina, Kitti Gosztola & Bence György Pálinkás, Fuzzy Earth (Tekla Gedeon & Sebastian Gschanes), Gideon Horváth, Hajnal Gyevik, Harun Morrison, Marie Ouazzani & Nicolas Carrier, Rita Süveges and SzabadonBalaton (Diána Berecz, Dániel Bozzai, Éva Bubl, Bence Fülöp, and András Zlinszky). Additional collaborators included Gergely Ofner, GUBAHAMORI, Mária Schuller & Borbála Vértesi, Anna Tüdős, Anna Varga, The New Liquidity (Selma Boskailo & Anders Ehlin), Áron Tóth-Heyn, Ádám Ulbert and Anna Zilahi.

BALATON FRIENDLY GARDEN

Not all gardens are directly on the waterfront, but gardens around Lake Balaton are connected to the lake's water system and wildlife. What happens in the garden has an impact on the

landscape and, through it, on the lake's ecosystem. The aim of Balaton Friendly Garden was to help us cultivate our gardens in a way that is good for Lake Balaton. Balaton Friendly Garden has highlighted points that anyone can take into account to help protect the beauty of the lake and its surroundings. Whether it's a kitchen garden, ornamental garden, vineyard or orchard, there are countless tools at hand that can be used to expand rather than limit human use: to create beautiful gardens that are more relaxing, have a more pleasant microclimate, require less maintenance, are more productive and can become an integral part of the Lake Balaton ecosystem. The good practices have been formulated in professional discussions and meetings with the help of experts, and are currently available to anyone on the balatorium.hu website.

SOUNDS OF LAKE BALATON – BALATORIUM MUSIC ALBUM

For the Balatorium music album – entitled Sounds of Lake Balaton – we asked Hungarian and international musicians to create music based on the sound patterns, experiences and impressions of Lake Balaton. The album, published by



Banana Records, was accompanied by ecological and artistic content and an album launch concert, featuring the sounds of Lake Balaton 2023 with musicians such as: Deva, Józsi Hegedűs, Iamyank, Jazzbois, Mmam (Péter Egyedi), Soma Nóvé, Onakom, SunMa, Wave of Sound, Snailtrip, Wavy and Richárd Zalai.

SLOW LANDSCAPE WALKS, ALGAE BAR AND BALATORIUM MENU

In 2022 and 2023, a series of interactive activities, tours and activities around Lake Balaton were held to bring Balatorium's aims closer to young and old, locals and visitors alike. Activities included a geodiverse stone tour in Dörgice, slow landscape walks in the Balaton Uplands, sensory walks along the shores of Lake Balaton and Tihany's Inner Lake, and tasting the flavours of Lake Balaton in the algae bar, which was present at several events. In the summer of 2023, we could also taste the Balatorium menu at some Lake Balaton restaurants, including Kistücsök Restaurant, Zománc Bistro and Bánya Kert.

BALATORIUM X GIRO D'ITALIA

All participants in the Balatorium project agreed that every opportunity should be taken to protect Lake Balaton and its environment. That is why on 8th May 2022, Szabadonbalaton held an action on the route of the Giro d'Italia cycling race along the Lake Balaton sites. The ecological-artistic action in Szigliget, in the Kenderfölk area of Tihany and in the Upper Marsh of Tihany involved sections of road that divide important wetlands. Here a series of flags drew attention to the natural habitats and their vulnerability. In the sections marked with a symbolic flag, the road crosses a wetland, which is therefore intersected by wildlife trails, as there is no other way for animals to reach the lake.

The aim of the action was to draw attention to the fact that cycling generates significantly less land use pressure and therefore less pollution of the lake's wildlife. If there were fewer people driving and more people walking, using community transport or cycling, a narrower road or a smaller car park would be enough. Cycling can therefore do a lot to protect the local microclimate, water quality and wildlife.

BASALT SCHOOL

Basalt School is a project of CAN Architects, providing a new layer of learning about the Lake Balaton Uplands: a learning space and methodology on each of the monadnocks.

Basalt School is the Kodály method of outdoor learning, created with the aim of enabling participants to experience their natural environment as active shapers, revealing their potential and the responsibility that comes from it. The natural landscape as a site for learning and cultural development plays an increasingly important role in modern pedagogies at formal, non-formal and informal levels. A strong example in the creation of the school was Scandinavian education, using everything from outdoor classrooms to the forest itself. Basalt School was an extension and development of all this: a nature-based programme for cognitive development, emotionally connected to our landscape treasures, in three parts:

Basalt Classroom (placemaking): using community design, landscape architecture and architectural tools to create outdoor learning spaces involving local children and youth.

Landscape exploration, creative and cultural workshops (activity creation): designing and testing informal and non-formal learning spaces in the basalt classroom.

Basalt Teaching Toolkit (methodology creation): based on the lessons learned from the workshops and the feedback from participants, compiling a methodological summary and creating an educational and training programme together with the professionals involved in its implementation.

In 2022-2023, 15 Basalt Classrooms were implemented at 9 schools in the region. The experience gained from these projects was compiled in a book by CAN Architects and the University of Pannonia. The book *Basalt School – Methodology of Outdoor Learning* was presented in House of Arts Veszprém in spring 2024.

INTERVIEW

THE KODÁLY METHOD AROUND BASALT ORGANS AND BEYOND – BASALT SCHOOL

CAN Architects Studio's team of architects have been working in the Győr and Budapest area for more than ten years, and they also offer architectural and built environment education, summer camps and school classes. In architectural design, the firm is the Hungarian specialist in school architecture, designing learning spaces in line with 21st century pedagogies. András Cseh, a member of the team, spends a lot of time as a settler in the Szent György Hill area and together with friends there, he came up with the idea that it is not just a matter of taking and receiving from the Balaton Uplands, but that it would be nice to give something back to the local community. The idea of Basalt School was born from a combination of school architecture and construction camp knowledge and the strengthening of local school communities.

“After the idea was conceived, we first set up a camp for children from the surrounding villages, with whom we built a hillside shelter under the basalt organs, which they then started to use as a kind of bunker, built it up, and although it was on a smaller scale than the ones we usually build with the help of students, it was still evident how much it was integrated into the children's everyday lives,” András recalls.

Basalt School, the Kodály method of outdoor learning, is all about children experiencing the natural and built environment around them as active shapers, so that the opportunities and responsibilities that come from this become visible to them. With the support of VEB2023 ECoC, the architects' office was able to take the project to the next level and introduce the method to several schools in the Lake Balaton region.

“We are omnivores, so to speak, design architects who design buildings ranging from small private houses to large apartment buildings, public buildings and monuments, but one of our favourite areas is schools and learning spaces, where we see that very few municipalities have the opportunity to renovate or even build new schools, even though teachers are particularly open to 21st century learning methods that are accompanied by learning spaces with character. This is how the idea of Basalt School was born, based on a collaborative design methodology, which means designing an outdoor classroom together with students and teachers, thinking together. This model already works well abroad, and natural or even built outdoor environments are often used for learning,” András says.

A THREE-PILLAR METHODOLOGY

In collaboration with educational developers, environmental psychologists, psychologists and educators, the members of the architectural practice developed the methodology of Basalt School, which is a community-driven design of a landscape, creative and cultural co-design, or session space, followed by the design and construction of the place, the Basalt Classroom.

“These steps are practically entirely absent from public education – the point of is to sensitise people to landscape and building. One example is the basalt-friendly activity. This is based on the fact that in every village there is a basalt heap that is typically treated as rubbish, while basalt is a valuable foundation and component of the Balaton Uplands landscape. So together with the children, we will look at where the basalt may have been quarried from, we will go there, the children will get to know the basalt itself and the landscape, and in the process we will choose the best location where we can create a classroom in nature,” András says.

In most cases, the choice is usually a green public space within the municipality or a forest close to the village, which belongs not only to the school but also to the community. This is particularly important because the area is accessible to everyone.

Finally, together with local teachers and children, they explore the potential of the site in terms of architecture and landscape architecture, and consider areas for renewal from an educational and community perspective. The final solution is decided by vote and, once the appropriate permits have been obtained, the Basalt Classrooms are built with the children.

“Then the teachers develop lesson plans complete with a space use plan, start using their new learning spaces with the students, and finally, by the end of the year, this knowledge will be compiled into a book entitled Basalt Teaching Toolkit, which contains processes, constructions, pedagogical methods and reflections on them, available to everyone nationwide, thus helping to spread the outdoor learning process more widely.”

EGER-VÍZ CREEK ART GUARD

The 32 km-long Eger-víz Creek, which flows into Lake Balaton, is one of the most striking natural treasures of the Balaton Uplands and the Southern Bakony. The 13 settlements along the creek – from Nagyvázsony to Kapolcs and Szigliget – are witnesses of the history of the ‘waterside’. It was once the route of a Roman military road, and was also the site of castles, monasteries, monadnocks and, of course, the 39 water mills of the days of yore.

The Eger-víz Creek Art Guard is a truly unique project – it aims to thematise the sustainability of this increasingly precious living water using a variety of tools of art, science and community collaboration. To conserve wetlands and resources, there was tight collaboration between the municipalities of 13 creekside communities and civil society organisations from all over the creek basin.

EGER-VÍZ DAYS

In connection with the natural values of the Eger-víz, various professional talks, thematic nature walks and cultural events such as dance and storytelling took place in several locations, but also crafts, a cake-making competition and theatre productions. The Eger-Víz Days were held in Veszprém, Öcs, Monostorapáti, Taliándörögd, Pula, Vigántpetend, Kapolcs, Nagyvázsony and Hegyesd, among others.

FOREST MYSTERY

The Protective Forest, located on the northern shore of Lake Hévíz, awaited visitors with a number of interesting adventures in 2023, which were made possible with the support of Hévíz Tourism Nonprofit Ltd and VEB2023 ECoC. The focus of the series of programmes was on the interconnections between nature and man, which were explored through ecotours, educational talks and cultural events in unusual locations and on a variety of themes.

The walks in the Protective Forest were arranged according to three age groups: primary school children, secondary school students and adults. The tours not only gave an insight into the wildlife and special features of Lake Hévíz and its surroundings, but also into the unique conservation processes taking place in the area.

Besides the walks, there were various educational and cultural programmes. These included theatre and puppet performances, an interactive forest school and mini-concerts.

MONSTERS AND MERMAIDS

Monsters and Mermaids is a comprehensive project aimed at raising the awareness of open-minded and receptive young children about the threats to the ecological values of Lake Balaton. The project included the publication of Zoltán Jeney’s book *Balaton Duck Plague*, which was turned into a play and toured the region. The book focusses on saving Lake Balaton through an entertaining, playful story. The book not only tells a story about the conservation of Lake Balaton, but also has an accompanying educational programme: a total of 1,200 young schoolchildren in the Bakony-Balaton region have learned about the natural values of Lake Balaton through playful drama and have won the Protector of Lake Balaton badge. The successful drama education programme and the book are part of the Monsters and Mermaids programme, which is a project of Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture and the implementing partner Arts for Rural Development Foundation.

The book was turned into a musical children’s play, which debuted in Veszprém’s GyereKert in spring 2023, and then premiered on several beaches of Lake Balaton in the summer.

The aim of the fairy tale and the play is to encourage children to venture out into nature and get to know their environment. The Digital Wanderer app includes a digital learning trail called *In the Footsteps of Monsters and Mermaids*, in which you can

follow a day in the life of Mama Sió, the fairy of Lake Balaton. The 8.3 km long trail starts from Koloska Valley in Balatonfüred and leads to Tagore Promenade, where children can learn about the flora and fauna and cultural heritage of the Balaton Uplands.

LAND P/RESERVATION

The Land P/reservation project, i.e. the Intelligent Landscape Toolkit of the Balaton Uplands, was carried out by the Centre for Contemporary Architecture (KÉK). Within the framework of Land P/reservation, researchers from KÉK and ADI Studio researched the role of communities in the area between Roads 71 and 77 along Lake Balaton for six months from autumn 2021. Through face-to-face interviews, they followed four research patterns:

- sustainable patterns and economies, i.e. sustainable ways of using the landscape;
- traditions in motion, where they observed how certain traditions change;
- experimental medium, focussing on the communities coming to the Lake Balaton Uplands, who often shaped the landscape to their own taste and are therefore very important actors in the process; and
- communities across the ages, which from time to time appear or disappear in the study area.

The research looked at what good practices exist in the region, through interviews with entrepreneurs, farmers, architects and cultural organisations.

LAND P/RESERVATION TOOLKIT

The results of the research have been published in a three-volume book series. The first, *The Vision of the Balaton Uplands*, seeks to change stereotypical perceptions of the region by exploring its smart land use, sustainable practices, innovative initiatives and community dilemmas, with a particular focus on the role

of communities. The second volume, *Welcome to the Balaton Uplands*, explores issues like what to consider when moving to the region and how to live in harmony with the landscape and local traditions. How to manage visitors and tourism in a way that is not a burden on local communities, but an asset that benefits the local community, is also important. And the third book, the final volume, *Learning from the Balaton Uplands*, was designed to collect and synthesise the knowledge and experience gained over the last few years. The book contains 15 interviews with local operators, who offer a vision of the future of tourism and farming, as well as of the functioning of the municipalities. It outlines practical tools and methods that can shape the region in a sustainable way in the coming decades – not only for Lake Balaton, but also for other regions in Hungary and abroad.

The Land P/reservation project included several educational events. One of these was the Peninsula Walk, where young and old alike could learn about the values of the Tihany peninsula through workshops, family walks and quizzes. This was the occasion for the launch of the Balaton Uplands Explorer, a booklet using museum education tools to help children learn about the Balaton Uplands landscape and its built heritage.

In autumn 2023, the Land P/reservation event Pomerium gave us the opportunity to visit the special buildings and gardens of Balatonalmádi. The aim of the walks was to discover the built and cultural heritage of the community. In addition to central sites like Pannónia Cultural Centre and Library, the fortress church of Vörösberény and the railway station, the Hungarian Post Holiday Resort, the Kompolthy Villa and the Kurcz Villa were also opened. Visitors were given a glimpse into the world of the air force pilots stationed here during World War II, met contemporary artists and tasted a loaf of bread baked in the historic oven at Szabó Bakery. Sándor Fúke talked about boat-building, and architects Gyula Ruttkay and Zsolt Szathmáry presented their construction designs for the dual-language secondary school and Pannónia.

















REFLECTION

Where do we come from, where are we going, how do we live our everyday lives, what kind of identity do we have – Veszprém, district, Lake Balaton, Hungarian, European – what inspires us and what are we fearful of? The cluster's programmes answered these questions, holding up a mirror through personal stories, using the tools of visual arts, literature, theatre and micro-history. The Private Veszprém and Personal Lake Balaton projects presented the attachment to Veszprém and Lake Balaton and the feelings of people living here today through family stories. Vacant shop windows came to life (with a pharmacist, a photographer and a barber), colourful characters appeared in the streets of the city, and interesting stories were told at boat, train and bus stops. The theatrical premiere of The Cholnoky Code brought to life the adventurous lives and complex personalities of the Cholnokys, a brilliant family from Veszprém. Contemporary photography and fine arts residency programmes appeared in the squares of Balatonfüred, Boglár and Badacsony, where the creators of this unexpected culture constantly surprised their audiences by giving artistic impressions of the world, the environment, the constant change of soul and spirit (Imre Bak, Dóra Maurer, Júlia Néma ...) We drew attention to the once significant Jewish community of Veszprém by cleaning and renovating the long-neglected Israelite cemetery in Veszprém's Szél Street. The Via Calvaria – Road of Silent Hills project offers an opportunity for quieting, calming and reflection. From the Balaton Uplands through Veszprém to Bakonybél, 14 lesser-known lookout points and calvaries offer the opportunity to discover the splendid natural environment and the sacred places that lift you out of the everyday.

We created connections and inspired creative participation among residents and visitors.

Hajnalka Vörös Márkus
Project Development Consultant
VEB2023 ECoC





ARTIST IN RESIDENCY PROGRAMMES

As European Capital of Culture 2023, our main goal was to present the Veszprém-Balaton region as a cultural-creative area with the tools of contemporary art and fresh approaches. The Artist in Residency (AIR) programme elements enrich the toolbox of several of our projects: House of Arts Veszprém, BALATORIUM and the Hungarian Translation House Foundation in Balatonfüred are also part of the programme series. The common denominator of the works of art, photography, ecological art and literature is that they were inspired by Lake Balaton: the invited artists created their unique works based on the experiences and impressions they had on the spot.

In the residency programmes, we invited both local and international artists to present their vision of the region through their artworks. Inspired by their impressions and experiences in the special atmosphere of Lake Balaton, the international artists' residencies' guests created works reflecting on Lake Balaton as a cultural landscape or as a natural setting at the intersection of ecological challenges.

BALATON EYE – PHOTOGRAPHY AND FINE ARTS AIR

The AIR programmes are carried out in cooperation with House of Arts Veszprém. One of the key programmes of the joint project was the artist in residency BALATON EYE, which brought Hungarian and international artists to the region to create works reflecting on Lake Balaton in their own style and through their own perspectives. Each creative process was concluded with an exhibition, where the results of the artists' research and active creative work were made visible to the public.

Participants of the photographic residency programmes 2023:

Europe Archive – Erik Kessels [NL], Thomas Mailaender [F]
Erik Kessels and Thomas Mailaender set out to create a project of collective memory, with important relics collected at European flea markets. One of the stages of this project was the flea market in Veszprém, where they collected objects that bear the characters of the region and later used them to create works of art, which were presented to the public in an exhibition.

Noémie Goudal [F]

During her residency in the Balaton region, Noémie Goudal explored the unique characteristics of the landscape, from the

ancient caves to the rock formations and the unique features of the northern part of Lake Balaton. Here, in Folly Arboretum in the hills of Badacsony, she observed the extraordinary flora and unique vegetation of the Permian sandstone, growing on shallow, siliceous soil. This resulted in a new installation, Stéréoscopes (2023), which she presented at the Inhale/Exhale exhibition at Dubniczay Palace in the summer of 2023.

Dafna Talmor [IL/GB]

Dafna Talmor photographed the varied beauty of the landscape, with a special focus on the rocks, in 16 locations in the Veszprém-Balaton region. She visited, among others, the Úrkút Paleokarst Nature Reserve, the Roman Baths of Bakonyháza, the educational trails of the Tihany Peninsula, the basalt organs of Kisapáti and Hegyestű. After a two-week visit to the region, she presented her new site-specific installation at House of Arts in the summer 2023.

Participants of the 2023 Art in Residence programme:

Júlia Néma, ceramic artist

For years, Júlia Néma has been researching and collecting local minerals, rocks and clays for her pioneering enterprise to create sculptural and utilitarian ceramic objects. In her wood-fired kiln, she uses the rich geological heritage of the Balaton Uplands to recreate millions of years of volcanic processes, resulting in unique colours and surfaces. The ceramic and porcelain objects, sculptures and tableaux that build on the landscape tell a story of nature's beauty, we were told at the exhibition Liquid Earth, which took us on a tour of his Balaton-inspired ceramics.

Peter de Thouars and András Bernát painters

Bernát András and Peter de Thouars met more than 40 years ago on the shores of the Inner Lake in Tihany, at the József Somogyi Artists' Camp. In 2022 they returned to Lake Balaton and through the Mirrors of Space project and the BALATON EYE residency programme we were able to see how the lake and Veszprém-Balaton inspire them once again. The final act of the project was an exhibition at Tihany Abbey in September 2023.

LITERARY AIR

Balatonfüred Translators' House hosted six poets of European significance as part of the Poems in Veszprém project. The poets' gathering resulted in a number of exquisite poems and unconventional 'literature lessons' for hundreds of students. Yvonne Reddick (United Kingdom), Ija Kiva (Ukraine), Gérard

Cartier (France), Antonio Rivero Taravillo (Spain), Jaan Malin (Estonia) and Guy Helming (Luxembourg) connected well with each other, and the Translators' House in Balatonfüred saw valuable and active exchanges between the poets. The experiences gathered during their stay inspired excellent works in English, French, Spanish, German, and even occasionally in Russian and Italian.

The invited poets also participated in two public programmes, offering enjoyable literary encounters to nearly four hundred secondary school and university students. They held discussions on poetry and literature at the University of Pannonia and on the concept of European identity at the House of Jewish Excellence in Balatonfüred. They also conducted unconventional language and literature lessons in the region's secondary schools, visiting Lóczy Lajos Secondary School in Balatonfüred, the Dual-Language Secondary School in Balatonalmádi, and Lovassy Secondary School in Veszprém for demonstration sessions.

The poets' regionally inspired works were not only featured in an online accessible poetry collection but also became public through a groundbreaking street theatre performance by drama students during the summer of 2023 in Balatonfüred, Veszprém and Balatonalmádi.

PRIVATE VESZPRÉM

In the Private Veszprém project, we explored the city's past through the involvement of Veszprém's residents, using their own family histories, and brought the last 150 years to life through an imaginary time travel experience.

The project was not only aimed at the people living in Veszprém but also at visitors from abroad who participated in programmes and festivals held by VEB2023 European Capital of Culture (ECOC). Through various installations, even while walking the streets, they could catch glimpses of the city's history. One of the highlighted programmes was called 'Reimagined Shop Windows,' where five shop windows were renewed throughout the city. While strolling through the downtown area, one could read about, among others, master barber Károly Francsics and Jenő Rosenberg, who built one of Veszprém's loveliest houses, now home to KUNSZTI!, a participant in the Street Management Programme.

Another key element of the Private Veszprém project was the compilation of a carefully curated photo collection. As a first step, organisers searched the archives and other available sources for

private and archival images. The local community was then asked to help expand this collection. Photo points were set up where we photographed Veszprém families alongside old family photos. From these photos, an exhibition and an album were created in 2023.

As the third element of the project, an unconventional outdoor sculpture exhibition was also organised, featuring statues of exceptional individuals who, in some way, are part of Veszprém's history. The statue of Jenő Cholnoky — Lake Balaton researcher and Nobel Prize-nominated geographer — was placed in the inner courtyard of 7 Kossuth Street. The statue of barber Károly Francsics is located in front of his former barber shop at 4 Rákóczi Street. The statue of Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jenő Rosenberg was erected in front of KUNSZTI! in Rosenberg House, built by him. The statue of Ferenc Óvári, former MP and founder of the Balaton Association, stands in the street named after him, opposite the theatre he founded. The figure of Imre Csikász, the free-spirited sculptor known as the 'Hungarian Rodin', was placed in front of Fricska Restaurant.

The project also served as a unique time travel experience: the statues of these great predecessors were modelled by people living today. Jenő Cholnoky was portrayed by his descendant, Péter Jávör; student Artúr Zentai posed for Jenő Rosenberg; László Laki, a prominent figure in Hungarian cultural life, modelled for Imre Csikász; Veszprém history teacher Gusztáv Zeitler posed for Ferenc Óvári; and historian Péter G. Tóth, who researched Francsics' life and studied his texts, stood model for Károly Francsics. The models were scanned, then digitally processed, and finally created using a 3D printer.

The Private Veszprém project didn't stop there: through the creation of 'Storytelling Bus Stops' we brought local historical curiosities to Veszprém's bus stops. In addition to the images displayed at the stops, interested individuals could use QR codes to learn more about the families, the project and the activities of VEB2023 ECOC.

INTERVIEW

ABOUT AN IMAGINARY TIME TRAVEL

A Discussion of the Experiences of the Private Veszprém Project

We spoke with the project leaders, Hajnalka Vörös Márkus and Dávid Szauder, about the outcomes and experiences of the Private Veszprém project.

Throughout the year, you organised several photo collection points, and by the end of the year, a tangible family history album was created. Could you tell us more about it?

Hajnalka:

We invited the residents of Veszprém to participate in the photo sessions, and people of all ages came — young, middle-aged, multi-generational families — all bringing an archival photo with them. They held these photos in their hands, indicating their connection to the city and to previous generations. Some brought not just one but several photos, on which we noted the names of those depicted. In the exhibition, we placed the families according to where they currently live. This alone was very interesting, as there were families who had not moved from their original homes for a long time and still live within a 500-meter radius. On the other hand, there were families who had moved from one part of the city to another many times. It was fascinating to see that, even though the selection and invitation for the photo sessions were not deliberate, residents from almost every part of the city participated. The creation of the album was preceded by intensive work: based on the photos and recollections, we condensed each family's story into a page and a half of material. Anna-Réka Baktay played a particularly significant role in this process. The most special aspect was how enthusiastically the families participated, culminating in the book launch on 7th December, where ten families each shared their stories in two-minute presentations. It's important to note that the book is bilingual, so all the content, including the family histories and photo descriptions, is also available in English.

Dávid:

I think it became a very exciting medium because it created a sort of interaction with the families. We felt this during the book launch as well. As Hajni mentioned, the families put their hearts into it and felt truly connected to the final result. I noticed that they really enjoyed the project and wanted to continue the

journey we embarked on together. I would like to refer back to 2023, as our goal was to initiate a process, a dialogue within Veszprém.

The challenge's concept was to showcase Veszprém's past through families during the year of the European Capital of Culture and to create a collective memory that, while rooted in the past, looks to the future. This collective memory consists of the stories of 25 families (one family's story was not included in the album but only in the exhibition). I believe this album is a true visual treasure that helped us achieve our goals. As Hajni mentioned, it is also available in English, so we can take it anywhere, even abroad, and share it with others who can learn about the city of Veszprém and its past through the stories of these families. In this way, I think Private Veszprém truly achieved its purpose, and we successfully concluded the project.

How would you evaluate the project, which ran on many levels and had multiple elements? Is there anything you would highlight? What are you most proud of?

Hajnalka:

Personally, I consider working with the families to be the most important and interesting part of the project, as it reached the widest audience and successfully engaged the families. It's like when you throw a stone into the water, and the ripples spread far and wide. This is what happened in practice. Initially, we sensed a bit of skepticism from the city leadership, particularly regarding the statues—they were concerned that the five statues, which were colourful, ranging from lemon yellow to pink to dark blue, might provoke outrage among the residents. But we experienced the exact opposite. People loved them, especially young people who often took selfies with the statues, and even tourists did the same. We saw that the statues came to life through the residents' interactions: Károly Francsics received a scarf in the cold, and Rosenberg got glasses on his hat to help him 'see'. They have once again become exciting parts of Veszprém, which was our goal—to draw attention to these forgotten figures who once did much for the city but whose characters have faded from collective memory. The 'Storytelling Bus Stops' were also highly successful, not just for pedestrians or bus passengers but even for those viewing them from cars.

Dávid:

I loved every part of this project, but perhaps one particularly cathartic experience stands out. We were photographing families with Bence Csobay, and the Debreczenyi-Zsebe family brought an incredibly beautiful old photo with them. As they

held it in their hands and smiled, it felt to me as if a dimension of the past had opened up through the photo. It was a very important moment. Another was when the album started coming together, and Anna-Réka and I felt that the stories were beginning to form a cohesive whole. Of course, seeing the finished album was also a fantastic moment. At the launch, when the families arrived and saw the album for the first time during the handover, such energy was released that, if it were possible to measure the energy of human emotions in a photo, I'm sure the results would have been incredible. We are fortunate to have experienced many such moments throughout the project.

VESZPRÉM MAP WANDERER

In the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme, initiatives that explore Veszprém's local historical values were of paramount importance. Our collaboration with the National Archives of Hungary (NAH) utilised modern technology to bring the archival treasures that reveal the city's fascinating past to a broader audience.

The development of the Veszprém Map Wanderer began in early 2022 with archival research. The archival expertise for the project was provided by Veszprém County Archives, the local branch of the National Archives of Hungary. The archives staff selected maps, documents and images from nearly two centuries' worth of material that could be used in the Map Wanderer, digitised them, and interpreted and processed the data needed for the database.

The foundation of the Map Wanderer is the street and building structure of Veszprém's historical core between 1857 and 1947. In the app, we presented information from old house registers and surveys, including key data about streets, houses and homeowners, and linked these to the digitised historical maps. This allows the Map Wanderer mobile app to offer users a unique experience of digital time travel. As you walk the streets of Veszprém with your smartphone in hand, you can explore the history of over 100 buildings through base maps created from the years 1857, 1927 and 1947, respectively, with direct access to the digitised archival data. Thus, locals and visitors interested in local history can browse plans of public buildings and residential houses, property registers and period photos preserved in the archives.

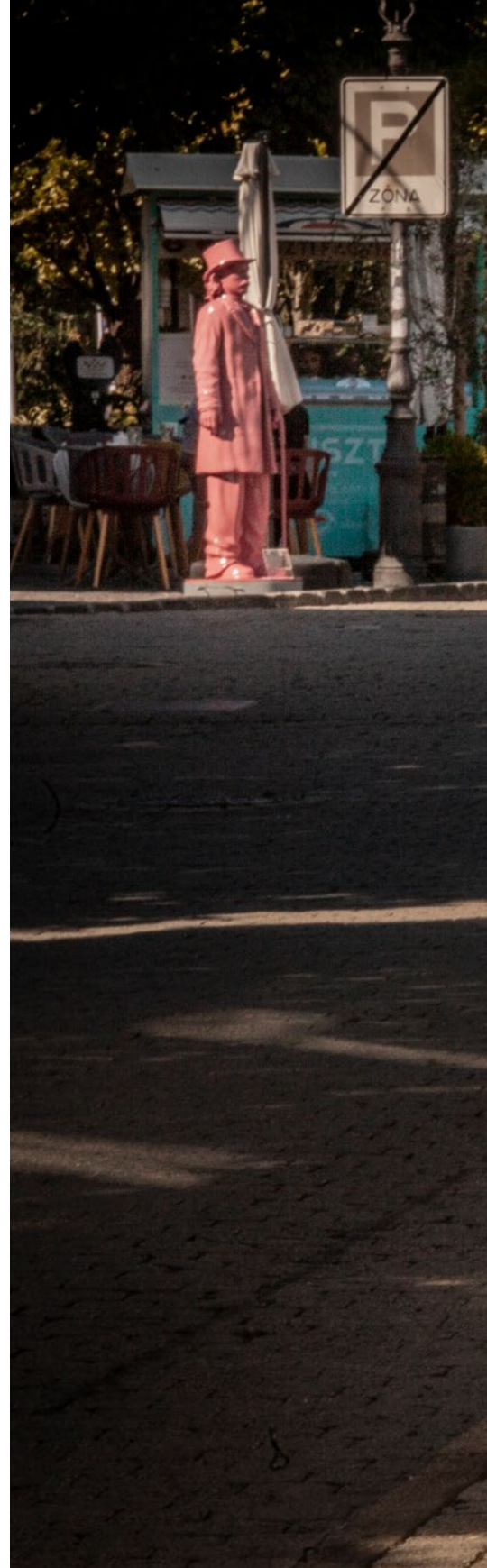
PERSONAL BALATON

The Personal Balaton project was born from a collaboration between Lipták Gábor Town Library in Balatonfüred and VEB2023 ECoC, with the goal of reviving the history of the Balaton region through photographs.

The central element of the Personal Balaton project was a photo collection campaign, where those connected to Lake Balaton — residents and holidaymakers alike — could upload their Balaton memories in the form of photographs to a public photo-sharing platform. This initiative wasn't limited to the online space; during the early stages of the project, people could also bring their photographs to designated locations for in-person photo collections. There, the images were scanned and the associated memories were recorded. These events took place in several locations, including Balatonboglár, Balatonakali and Balatonfüred.

Some of the images were displayed in outdoor exhibitions, but perhaps more importantly, a comprehensive photo archive was created. This archive houses Balaton-themed photographs from the 1930s to the 1980s and even up to the 2000s, all in one place.

With nine exhibitions — including selections that recalled the history of sailing, writers' holidays by the lake and the history of rail transport around Lake Balaton — the quantitative results are more than 100,000 visitors, cultural programmes on both the northern and southern shores of Balaton and community photo collection events. However, the Personal Balaton project provided much more: it showed that the history of our beloved Lake Balaton is an important and living heritage within all of us, an integral part of our identity. Therefore, the photo collection will continue beyond 2023—anyone can upload photos taken around the lake to the privatbalaton.hu platform or submit them in person at the Personal Balaton collection point set up at Lipták Gábor Town Library in Balatonfüred.













BRIDGES

Bridges, connections, links—this is the main focus of my work. By creating and operating community hubs, organising the Generational Bridge programme series, and establishing the ‘On the Table’ roundtable discussion series, we ourselves played the role of a connecting bridge. We facilitated meetings between social groups that, without our help, would most probably never have engaged in dialogue.

We gave special attention to the communities of young people, mothers with little children and families, and those over 65, as well as to supporting and representing the interests of different districts of Veszprém and marginalised groups within society. Our goal was to strengthen civil organisations and informal communities during the preparation phase and throughout the programme year so that, by 2023, they would be capable of operating independently, developing their communities, and retaining their members.

In many cases, these connections and links could only be established by breaking down barriers that had existed for decades. For example, we made events accessible to people with disabilities, thereby gaining a new community for our events and opening up new opportunities for these communities. One of our greatest successes is that sign language interpreters became almost regular guests at Gyárkert (Factory’ard) concerts.

At our events, it didn’t matter what nationality someone identified with but rather that they lived here in Veszprém, in the region, and that with their values and cultural heritage, they were part of a whole. We provided space for independent initiatives and the presentation of ethnic traditions, as evidenced by the ‘Silent Hills Trail’ (Via Calvaria) connecting the calvary structures of villages with German roots, or the Roma community development programme initiated by Romani Design.

We embraced, supported and unified these special small communities, which have now become strong pillars and are themselves forming the bridge to future generations.

Szilvia Bonyhádi
Project Manager
VEB2023 ECoC





ROMANI FOR BERHIDA

The Romani Design brand is easily recognisable by its diverse forms and colours, with the fabric of its unique garments almost tangible proof that the creators weave their love for fashion and their own traditions into each piece. The brand owners, Erika Varga and Heléna Varga, aim to build bridges between different cultures through fashion. This core idea sparked an initiative developed within the ‘Together for Berhida’ programme, in collaboration with the Amaro Trajo Foundation and supported by VEB2023 ECoC. The project’s goal was to uniquely support the development of Roma culture and community in Hungary, as well as guide young talents in their career paths.

The meetings, workshops, and activities organised in the programme were experience-based, with a focus on the acquisition of practical knowledge. This allowed participants to recognise their potential and gain insight into various fashion professions. To achieve these goals, day camps and residential camps were announced starting in 2022, forming a key part of talent nurturing during the summer holidays. The workshops functioned as creative studios at the Berhida Community Centre and Library, providing space for sewing, crafting and jewellery-making activities. The main target group was teenagers, often accompanied by their younger siblings and mothers. External mentors and professionals supported the collaborative creation process during the programmes.

INTERVIEW

“OUR MAIN GOAL IS TO OPEN UP THE WORLD THROUGH FASHION”

Interview with Erika Varga, Co-founder of Romani Design

“For me, fashion is the same as words for a writer or colours for a painter. Through my clothes, I can express myself and create the world I want to live in,” writes Erika Varga on the Romani Design website. In addition to founding the nationally and internationally recognised fashion brand over ten years ago with her sister Heléna Varga, Erika plays a significant role in the educational and social development of Roma communities.

A STRONG CONNECTION TO LAKE BALATON

“Through Romani Design, we’ve spent a lot of time in the Kál Basin, where we have many artisan friends. My talent development work is also partly connected to Lake Balaton since, from the age of 18, I’ve been involved in organising camps for Roma youth in Balatonszemes, and I even attended such camps myself. So, I developed a connection to Lake Balaton relatively early, and it was in the lake that I learned to swim as an adult. My sister and I love this area, as we’ve held several fashion shows around the lake. So, I must say that not only professional experiences but also many personal memories tie us to Lake Balaton,” Erika shares. Given this, it’s perhaps not surprising that the designers of Romani Design play a leading role in the ‘Together for Berhida’ programme, centred at Berhida Community Centre and Library. Erika had long wished to create a community-building programme within an organic community, with a focus on career orientation that would target not only young people but their families as well. “Our main goal is for the knowledge children gain to also function within the family, so we’re not specifically focussed on working with children but with families,” Erika explains. She believes that with the help of this project, participants could become self-sufficient within a few years if the currently missing connection points within the town’s social fabric are established.

PRACTICE-ORIENTED PROGRAMMES

The activities within the programme not only provided experiences for the young participants but also allowed them to gain practical skills and hands-on experience thanks to professional support. They were given insights into various fashion-related professions, such as fashion design, costume design, sewing, makeup artistry, hairstyling, photography, acting, performing or dancing. The camps and workshops helped them determine which direction interested them most.

“I believe that true knowledge can only be gained, children can only be developed, and a potential career path can only be provided if we create a vision in their minds that allows them to truly try out and understand professions that are generally inaccessible to Roma youth. We provided this opportunity with the help of our professional experts, and our main goal was to open up the world through fashion and bring it to the Berhida community.”

ON THE TABLE

From the very beginning, community building and inclusion have been key values of the Veszprém-Balaton European Capital of Culture 2023 programme. The creation of the On The Table event series introduced a unique approach to community building in the region. This well-structured thematic series consisted of enjoyable roundtable discussions held around breakfast tables, each set with local products. Alongside the gastronomic delights, important topics were always 'on the table'. The meetings provided a friendly opportunity for knowledge sharing and exchanging experiences. Invited experts gave short thematic presentations, acting as catalysts, which naturally evolved into informal discussions.

The participants addressed significant topics at these events, such as corporate social responsibility, green thinking, environmental sustainability, family-friendliness, and how these can be implemented in workplaces, whether in small, medium, or large enterprises.

Several initiatives achieved their goals as a result of the On The Table event series. With the help of the participants, a relaxation garden was created in the Vászoly orchard, raised beds were provided to nursery children in Balatonkenese, and the nursery in Nemesgulács received a dehydrator, allowing them to prepare healthy snacks for the children.

Throughout 2021, 2022, and 2023, these events touched on issues relevant to the following communities: Nemesgulács, Vászoly, Jásd, Káptalantóti, Alsópáhok, Zalacsány, Balatonkenese, Magyarpolány, Balatonszőlős and Szigliget.

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE

Misunderstanding, communication gaps and isolation are often factors that lead to generational tensions. Recognising this, we launched the Generational Bridge workshops at Pannon Community Hub in 2021 with the intent of community building. From the meetings of the workshop members, ideas for event series emerged, with participants developing and participating in the preparation and implementation of traditional and sports programmes.

The primary goal of these programmes was to bring different generations together, enabling them to explore activities they consider valuable and relaxing, learn from one another and inspire each other. Through activities like woodworking, strudel

stretching, pizza baking and balcony gardening, participants not only gained useful knowledge but also had the opportunity to enjoy themselves together and strengthen their connections.

Beyond the valuable time spent together, the events focussed on the exchange of experiences and initiating dialogue between representatives of different generations. The shared work and topics helped bridge generational differences and foster communication and openness. This process was further supported by mentorship.

IN THE LAND OF QUEENS

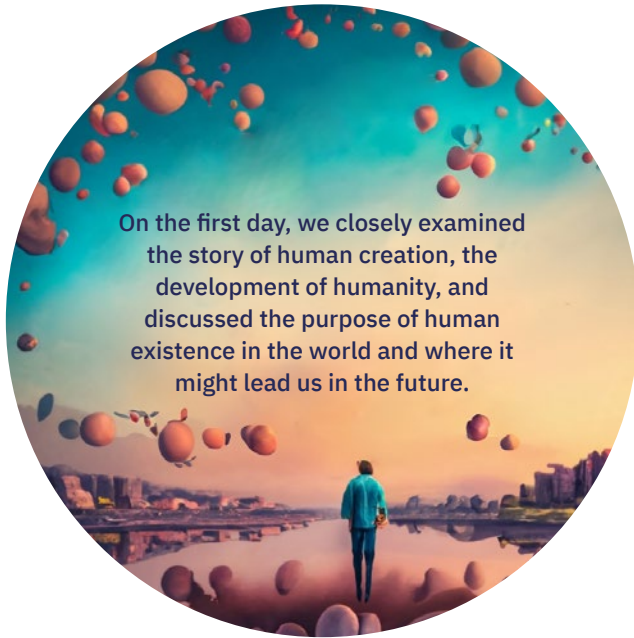
The In the Land of Queens programme series aimed to draw attention to the diverse and impactful women of Veszprém, highlighting 'women of a thousand faces' in the local community.

Veszprém has always been proud of its communities, characterised by diversity and wealth. Local civil organisations maintain their traditions, with women playing active roles in these groups. However, the richness and diversity of women's lives in Veszprém had not been prominently featured before. The In the Land of Queens programme, including the Week of Queens event, sought to change this.

The In the Land of Queens team developed a multi-part professional programme. The preparatory training sessions and workshops aimed to explore how past meets present and who the 'women of a thousand faces' of Veszprém really are. Beyond identifying key communities, the first milestone involved discovering hidden values that helped us collectively explore the uniqueness of Veszprém women through a festival. The professional approach was gradual, allowing for the mapping and surfacing of diverse values, experiences and spontaneous ideas, thereby supporting the gradual building of communities and sustaining voluntary participation.

The programme series, which focussed on small communities and lovable solutions, offered gastronomic events, workshops with renowned psychologists and mental health professionals on the role of women at home and in the workplace, and even included an art competition. A total of 194 events were held within the framework of the programme series, attracting nearly 3,000 visitors.

MADÁCH 200 THOUGHT FESTIVAL



On the first day, we closely examined the story of human creation, the development of humanity, and discussed the purpose of human existence in the world and where it might lead us in the future.

Is Eternal Life Possible? Can sustainable development truly be sustained? What's behind phenomena like climate anxiety or increasing loneliness? What is the future of money and capitalism? What sciences and pseudosciences do we know? What are the latest astronomical discoveries, and what dangers might aging societies face? How can artificial intelligence assist us in everyday life, or conversely, what negative impacts might the world of AI bring?

At the Madách 200 Thought Festival in October 2023, these questions and more were explored over five days, with discussions centred on science, history, public life, philosophy and cultural issues. Alongside engaging talks, the festival featured presentations, concerts and tech exhibitions.

During the Madách 200 Thought Festival, economic, social, psychological, philosophical, and ecological topics were brought into focus, all stemming from a common starting point: one of Imre Madách's most important works, *The Tragedy of Man*. Each day, participating experts, artists, and representatives of religions delved into new themes and questions.



On the second day, discussions centred on the themes of autocracy and democracy, the Self and the Community in relation to Egyptian, Athenian and Roman cultures. European religious history was also covered.

We sought answers with sociologists, scientists, teachers, religious figures, economic experts and philosophers. Among the conversation partners were Prezi co-founder Ádám Somlai-Fischer, writer Orsolya Karafiáth, psychologist Annamária Tari and economist Zoltán Pogátsa.



The third day brought the ideas of the Renaissance and Enlightenment into focus, along with the sciences of the era, democracy and pressing contemporary issues. Topics such as burnout, work-life balance and the significance of dreams also emerged



The fourth day revolved around the economy and the technological revolution, discussing both the positives and negatives of consumer society.



On the final day, the possibilities for our future came into view. Topics included ecology, environmental protection, climate disaster and the associated climate anxiety: what could be the solutions to today's most pressing problems, and how can we contribute to change both individually and on a larger scale?





to Maria



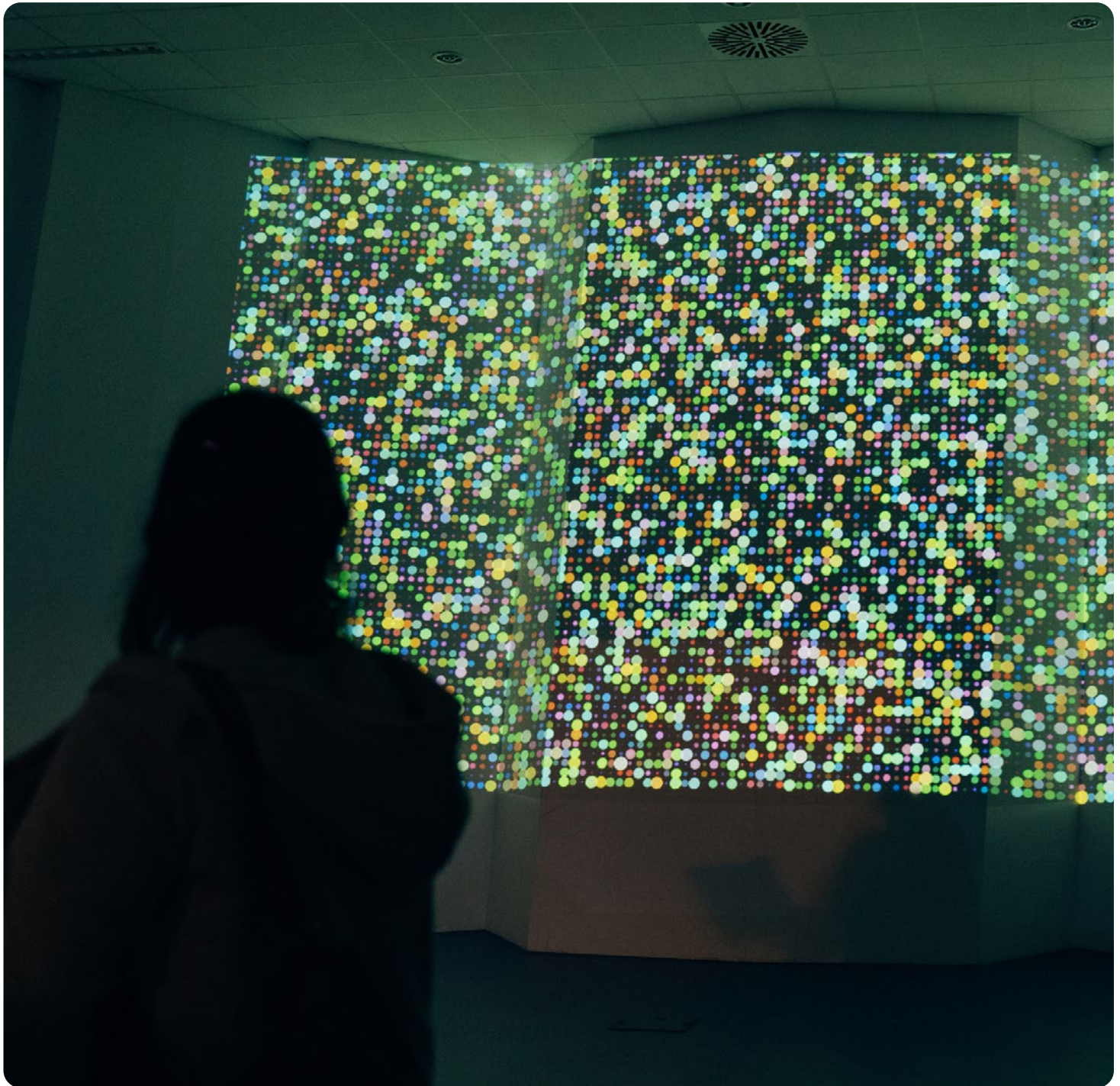
Boeli

Santa

Santa









OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY

We interpreted the term 'out-of-the-ordinary' in fundamentally two ways. On one hand, we embedded the intention of experimentation in this word, and many truly progressive presentations were realised within this programme package. On the other hand, somewhat paradoxically, we also regarded the most everyday things as extraordinary. The reason why the programmes in this cluster worked so well and were so much loved is that we used spaces where we spend our daily lives: the street, the market, the train station, the forest, the ruined church in the centre of the city, various entertainment venues, or even a courtyard of a block of flats.

For me, the most memorable event was Off-Season Contemporary Literature Festival, which we held in February, a month considered an almost impossible time, in small cafes and clubs in Veszprém. We focussed on literary genres like crime, fantasy, comics and sci-fi—genres that are generally underrepresented at similar events, even though many people read and create in these genres.

The Ruin Concerts series was also among my favourites. In fact, I think one of my most memorable experiences of 2023 was those few minutes when, sitting on the grass with around 120 people at the ruins of the Our Lady's Church in Dörgicse, we listened to László Kollár-Klemencz's singing with the Balaton panorama behind us and the setting sun to our left.

Of course, I should also mention the unconventional theatre performances and the forest Reading Cabin, which, in my view, has become one of the most beautiful symbols of the harmonious connection between nature and culture.

Richárd Varga
Cultural Project Manager
VEB2023 ECoC



INOTA

The Inota Thermal Power Plant, located alongside Road No 8, supplied electricity to the Hungarian grid for nearly 50 years. Since its closure, the site has been out of reach to everyone except the Blade Runner 2049 crew and a few adventurous urban explorers and photographers. That was until the summer of 2022, when factory gates reopened to the public with an exciting audiovisual event series.

In 2022, as part of the Inota (re)opening, the factory grounds were filled with site-specific projections and musical experiences, and thematic walks were launched. Under the guidance of Túrajó, we could participate in tours that explored the history of Inota and discovered where the local party leaders' favourite thermal baths were, who lived in the adjacent emergency housing estate, and generally what prosperity meant during the Kádár régime.

The reopening was followed by INOTA Festival in the last weekend of summer 2023, where for four days, representatives of the domestic and international underground music and visual art scenes populated the factory grounds. Among the performers were Max Cooper, Nils Frahm and Extrawelt, as well as Platon Karataev, iamyank and Balázs Zságer, who, alongside Kati Katona, created a unique musical and visual experience.

In addition, various areas of the factory were opened, where grandiose light projections created a special atmosphere. Flickering and dreamlike projections, along with sound effects, transported every participant into an extraordinary dimension.

INOTA Festival also provided space for professional dialogue: the event was opened by a professional conference where representatives of various art forms and the creative industry discussed the future of this unique industrial complex and how such unconventional places can become venues for cultural and artistic events.

RUIN CONCERTS

Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture's Ruin Concerts series filled the ruins of medieval monasteries, churches, chapels and castles in the region with life and art.

Contrary to large festivals attracting massive crowds, these events aimed to create opportunities for more personal and intimate connections between performers, audiences and the environment. Therefore, the performances were held in small, family-like settings, often outdoors. Minimising environmental

impact and exploring and protecting the values of nature and history were also key elements of the series, so the events were held as ZERO WASTE, meaning waste-free.

Starting in 2021, the series featured renowned figures from Hungary's literary, musical and theatrical scenes, including Zoli Beck (30Y), Miklós Vecsei, Viktória Szávai, Hunor G. Szabó (The Qualitons), the Ivan and the Parazol duo, Krisztián Szűcs (HS7), Balázs Szálinger, Gergő Balla (Platon Karataev) and Zsolt Prieger (Anima Sound System). The unusual venues included Our Lady's Church ruins in Dörgicse, St. Blaise's Church ruins in Balatoncsicsó and Margaret Ruins in Veszprém.

OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY SPACES

The main mission of the 'Out-of-the-Ordinary Spaces' theatre series in the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme was to present a wide range of contemporary theatrical forms to Veszprém and regional audiences and to bring theatre to the people: to streets, gymnasiums, parks, markets, beaches, and even extreme locations like observatories or quarries.

In 2022, the 'Out-of-the-Ordinary Spaces' series presented seven unique theatre productions. By showcasing the widest possible range of genres — from non-verbal theatre and forest theatre to specifically underground plays — it made Tuesday evenings exciting. This was no different in 2023, with the public able to attend a total of 12 performances.

During these events, we experienced the power of theatre in locations like the Farkasgyepű Forest, the gymnasium of Lovassy László Secondary School in Veszprém, Veszprém market, a winery in Badacsony or on a train. The collaborating companies included Forte Company, Artus Theatre, Budapest Puppet Theatre, Amargant Theatre Workshop and Kabóca Puppet Theatre.

READING CABIN

With the construction of the Reading Cabin, we aimed to create an unconventional space that conveys the love of nature, the importance of environmental consciousness and the escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday through literature. It connects the forest, art and people. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to launch programmes that, alongside these values, aim to promote reading and nurture local cultural and scientific heritage.

The unique space can inspire and promote reading among young people. The cabin also offers numerous educational opportunities. The thematic shelves and certain programmes at, or related to, the cabin promote environmental awareness. Research shows that environmental consciousness and nature protection are becoming increasingly important among young people. The forest reading cabin essentially combines these two circles: literature and environmental consciousness. The programmes within the project complement and enhance this spirit, providing a favoured place for those who wish to escape the daily rush.

Designed by students of MOME Institute of Architecture (Liza Formanek and Imola Fazakas) and built under the guidance of MOME lecturer Dániel Baló, the cabin was constructed in the park forest near Ajka-Csingervölgy, at the intersection of hiking trails.

KRYPTON HOUSE MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCE CENTRE

Thanks to Ajka's rich industrial heritage, which includes numerous industrial monuments and cultural and intellectual legacies, a unique cultural, tourist and innovation district has been established in the town with the reimagining of this heritage and the reopening of the world's first Krypton Factory.

The Krypton Factory was established in 1937 due to the invention of the krypton gas electric lamp by physicist Imre Bródy, who was originally from Ajka, and it operated until the summer of 1944. The factory building was revitalised as a special multifunctional space in spring 2023 as part of the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme. Located in remote Csingervölgy, the experience centre hosted outdoor film screenings, concerts and a nostalgic Miners' Day in 2023. It also featured unique VR experiences, including encounters with Superman and opportunities to step into the superhero's shoes at the Krypton Academy. The suburban picnic held here included sports and pub games, craft activities, and graffiti sessions, with even more events planned for the coming years.

VIA CALVARIA

The Via Calvaria, aptly named the 'Trail of Silent Hills', is a North Transdanubian hiking route connecting 14 calvary structures through the forests of the Bakony and the picturesque

landscapes of the Balaton Uplands. Participants can not only enjoy the scenery but also experience the essence of slow tourism, which emphasises introspection, immersion and tranquillity.

The Via Calvaria is based on the concept of the Trail of the Holy Hills, which is particularly popular in Europe and Germany. The Via Calvaria features several Hungarian German (Swabian) settlements among its 14 stops, and Jásd is well-known among the Slovak community in Hungary. The goal of creating this route was to showcase the cultural treasures of the Swabian community in Hungary and to familiarise more people with their built environment and traditions. The route sections are designed to be inaccessible by bicycle or car — an important aspect of its design, as the essence of the Via Calvaria is to experience tranquillity on foot.

The routes are suitable for school trips and also provide opportunities to stay in a specific settlement for a while. The website offers information on essential details such as where to stay, where to find food stores or restaurants, and directions for hiking. The hikes can be undertaken alone or with family, allowing for restful breaks in the settlements and opportunities to explore interesting spiritual and cultural historical content.

The project encompasses three regions and 14 settlements:

- Balaton Uplands: Barnag, Szentjakabfa, Vöröstó
- Zirc and Surroundings: Bakonybél, Bakonynána, Jásd, Lókút, Olaszfalu, Zirc
- Veszprém and Ajka Area: Bakonygyepes, Gyulafirátót, Magyarpolány, Márkó, Városlőd





















CELEBRATION

It is hard not to use grand terms when writing about the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) and its Celebration.

It is clear, and even somewhat well-known, that the initiative itself began in the 1980s with the intention of celebrating and rejoicing. The goal was for European nations to take pride in their culture and showcase it to their own citizens and to those who would visit in the title year. They were to open their doors, windows, hearts and souls wide, set out chairs in their gardens to welcome new guests, and, while presenting the pride of their own cultural life, also be open and receptive to the cultural treasures and wonders brought by other European nations with similar pride.

Beyond all this, here in Veszprém, in our programme, we envisioned Celebration as those one-time, unique events that, in their form and scale, would probably never return. In my view — and I don't think I am exaggerating if I speak for many of us — the Grand Opening was the most important, grandiose, and impactful one of these.

Firstly, having to hold the first major event in the January cold, 'kicking in the door' with the challenge of drawing over twenty thousand visitors despite the biting cold, and showing the city's residents, newcomers and the world what the ECOC message is, was a significant burden for the team.

In a city built on seven hills, lacking a grand central square, the three historic squares were simultaneously filled with similar content but different in execution, each hosting a programme of 50 minutes from 8 p.m. Trinity Square, the beautiful main square of the castle; Old Town Square, the heart of the baroque old town and its largest market square for decades; and Kossuth Street, the main square of modern Veszprém, all featured three grand stages with hundreds of performers, giant puppets and strong visual elements combined with building projections, impressing the audience of over twenty thousand.

As organisers, we feared rain and sleet — hundreds of dancers on slippery, snowy stages presented a huge risk. But in the last moment, the heavens were on our side: during the performance, snow fell in huge, sparkling flakes, enhancing the lighting and visuals like a special effect. We felt the uniqueness of the moment on site, and perhaps its beauty and solemnity were even more striking in the television broadcast.

Perhaps it was a sign that the heavens also blessed the grand start of the year 2023. There was a Celebration in the sky, and there was a Celebration on the ground.

Zoltán Mészáros
Chief Adviser to the CEO
VEB2023 ECOC



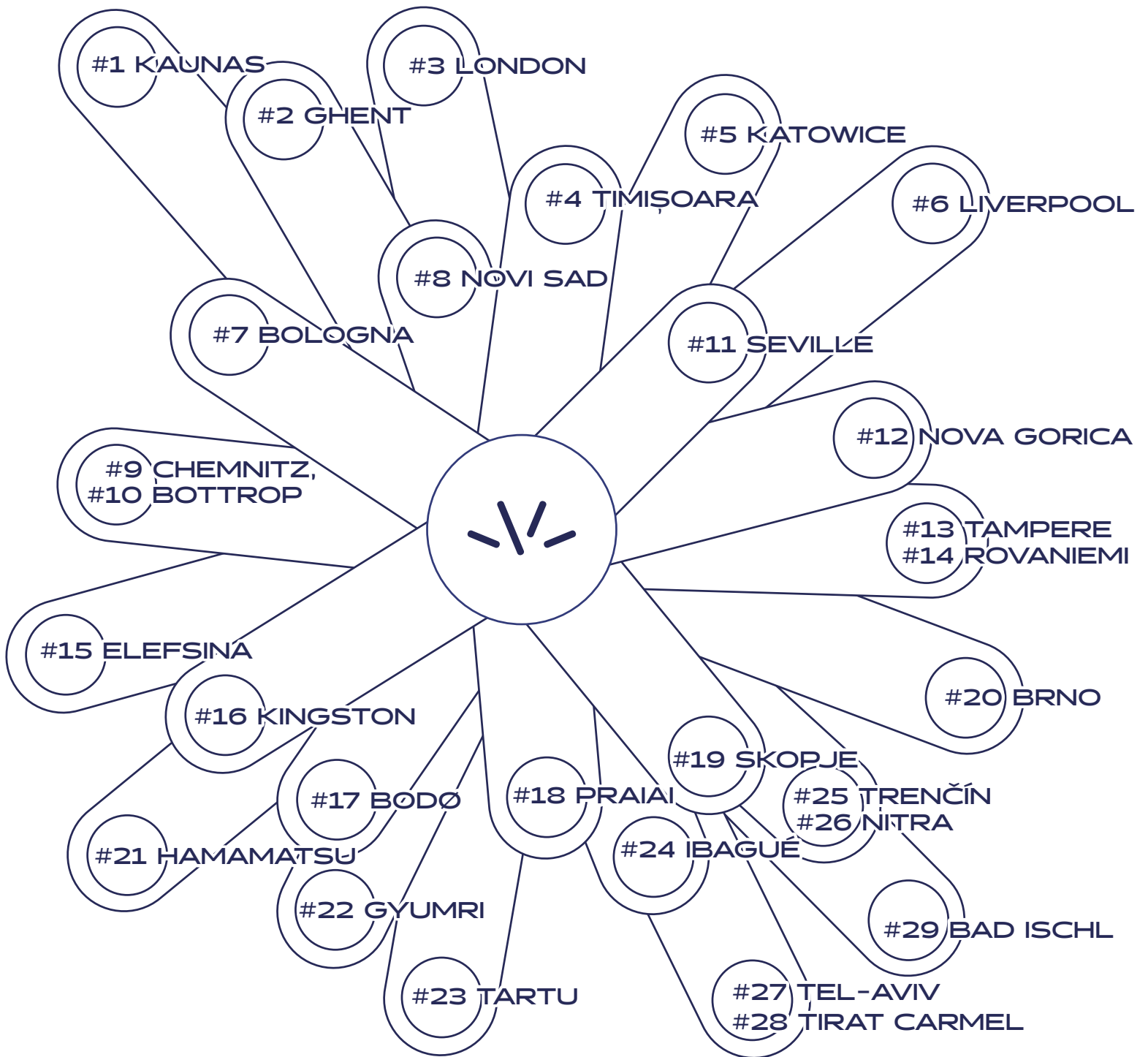


INTERURBAN

In 2023, we brought the whole world to Veszprém: through 29 cities and their 25 countries, we experienced the melodies, flavours and creators from distant lands every two weeks. The guests included cities with the UNESCO City of Music title, European Capital of Culture cities, and several of Veszprém's twin cities.

From the beginning, we, as European Capital of Culture 2023, have believed that we can be proud not only of our own city, region and country's cultural treasures, but also of the unique heritage of cultures that span Europe and the entire world. When we created the InterUrban series, our goal was to open doors between cultures and thereby make the audience more open as well.

The event series was launched by Kaunas, European Capital of Culture 2022, followed by Ghent, London, Timișoara, and even took us to Jamaica, Armenia and Japan. Through cooking classes, concerts, theatrical performances, dance performances, jam sessions, tea ceremonies, concert-theatre productions, literary discussions, bike parades, exhibitions and other vibrant cultural programmes, we absorbed the cultures around us.



INTERVIEW

EXPERIENCES WITH THE INTERURBAN PROGRAMME

Interview with Kata Jávör, Project Manager of InterUrban

In 2023, we didn't even need to leave Veszprém to experience the entire world. This was made possible by the InterUrban project, which for a year brought the cultures of 29 cities in 25 countries to us through a two-week rotation of dance, music, visual arts and culinary programmes. As the project came to an end, we were curious about how the organisers felt about the programmes and what new insights they gained as partners in the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme. We asked Kata Jávör, the project manager of InterUrban, about their experiences.

Overall, how would you assess the InterUrban project? Is there anything you would highlight as something you are most proud of?

The slogan of the InterUrban programme was: 'Hosting the World'. Now, in December 2023, we can say that we have succeeded; indeed, the whole world was our guest. We implemented 150 cultural programmes, during which 29 cities from 25 countries came to Veszprém and the region. The core idea was: 'You stay home, and we'll bring the world to you'. As a major international programme series, InterUrban created a vibrant cultural buzz that made the European Capital of Culture year stand out and was immediately embraced by the open and curious audience.

One of the main goals of the project was to build community through various workshops and programmes. How successful do you think you were in achieving this goal?

Since InterUrban refreshed itself every two weeks, hosting a different city each time, a new community formed at every workshop and programme. There were InterUrban fans who we are reaching out to now at the end of the year via our Facebook page because those who were truly open did feel the benefits of sampling distant cultures, tasting exotic foods, making a percussion instrument, learning screen printing or folding scarves. Each experience added colourful knowledge and experiences to their lives, as if they had participated in a journey enriching their lives.

What opportunities did the project offer to you or your immediate environment?

The InterUrban programme series was conceived and implemented by Hangvető Ltd; Hangvető was also involved in the application

phase for the European Capital of Culture, assisting Veszprém as we have collaborated with the city for many years. Numerous ideas and plans were realised in the European Capital of Culture year, further strengthening the good relationship with the city and region. Our network has expanded, and we would be happy to help cities applying for this title in the future. The European Capital of Culture year is a remarkable period in Hangvető's history, and our staff are proud to have worked on such a significant project, achieving great results.

In practice, during the project, we worked in collaboration with the VEB2023 ECoC team, but we had the freedom to select the performers and set up the programmes. Working on an international, multidisciplinary programme series, where we realised 150 events over 50 weeks, our personal experiences also confirm that it is wonderful to learn about the cultures of different countries. We have become much more open-minded through this experience.

GYÁRKERT (FACTORY'ARD) CULTUREPARK

In the heart of Veszprém, the former Balaton Furniture Factory site stood abandoned for a long time, a two-hectare area that we always believed was full of potential. So, we grabbed the magic wand and, with the help of Hungary's leading pop-up architects, envisioned an event venue that, with its capacity of 4,500 people, two stages and numerous dining units, delivered some of the most memorable concert experiences of 2023 to the community — and much more. Opening on the first weekend of May, Gyárkert hosted both international stars such as Iggy Pop, Paolo Nutini and Paul Kalkbrenner and also representatives of the Hungarian music scene like Péter Geszti and Vad Fruttik.

Moreover, it added much more to Veszprém's daily life: beyond concert days, the park transformed into a community space where hundreds sang together at Halftime Festival and during the winter months, the sounds of tobogganing and ice skating could be heard as part of the Holiday Shine series.

In the form of Gyárkert, Veszprém gained a new festival and community venue, exemplified by the 'Garden of Communities' installation designed by the Hello Wood architectural team. The essence of the installation is that each of the 116 municipalities joining the VEB2023 EKF programme received a large box made

of 120-year-old larch wood, commemorating the 120-year history of Balaton Furniture Factory of Veszprém. Each box contained a native tree seedling, and from these boxes, a tower over ten metres high was built, displaying the names of the towns and villages. In the installation, the living green symbols strengthen biodiversity and symbolise the power found in diversity. The creation also left a lasting mark on the international design scene, winning the BIG SEE – where life is creativity Wooden Design Grand Prix award in autumn 2023.

BALATON WINE AND GOURMET

The Balaton Wine and Gourmet Festival, first held in autumn 2022 under the charming trees of Veszprém Valley, aimed primarily to showcase the region's gastronomic excellence and, in second place, to bring together key actors of the Hungarian gastronomy and wine industries as well as international cuisines. An important commitment was also to present the year-round potential of Lake Balaton and the region, defining it as an attractive destination in both winter and summer.

Bistro Sparhelt, Dobosi Estate Centre, Füge Gastro Port, Mór 24 – just a few names of those we encountered at the inaugural event in 2022. The festival catered to enthusiasts of classic and fine dining as well as fans of beach food, offering a wide range of delicious treats. This year, we explored Japanese and Portuguese cuisine, participating in multi-course thematic dinners related to these cuisines. Additionally, we enjoyed wine and sake tastings, as well as tea ceremonies, while children could partake in cooking and baking activities specifically designed for them, delving into the secrets of gastronomy.

In 2023, during the European Capital of Culture year, the festival hosted Argentina and France, highlighting fine wines and unique gastronomy. Michelin Bib Gourmand restaurants around Lake Balaton showcased their offer at a joint dinner, and the programme included an Argentine experience lunch and a tango demonstration.

In the coming years, Balaton Wine & Gourmet Festival aims to continue as a prominent gastronomic event in Veszprém, enriching the region's event lineup.

SONG VALLEY

Song Valley provided a professional and community meeting opportunity for amateur choirs from Hungary and the Carpathian

Basin, offering the general public unique concert experiences. Up to the European Capital of Culture year, there had been no similar event held in Veszprém or even in the Hungarian choral scene for a long time. Choirs, as cultured communities, are not only promoters, cultivators and preservers of musical literature but are also important identity-building participants in their municipalities. The pandemic conditions of recent years had a most adverse effects on choirs: they weakened in numbers, activities and community events, and in many cases, their long-term operation became uncertain. Opportunities for meetings, rehearsals and performances were missed, with serious cultural, community and mental consequences.

We aimed to counteract these trends with Song Valley: the four-day event in June offered performance opportunities and professional meetings in Veszprém and the surrounding region – local choirs hosted visitors from afar and built connections with one another. On the occasion of Song Valley, we also compiled new scorebooks, expanded the choral literature with works by contemporary composers and sought creative solutions to new cultural, community and mental challenges.

ENCHANTED PUPPET FESTIVAL

From May 11-14, 2023, Pápa Historical Society, in collaboration with Pegazus Theatre and the National Institute for Cultural Development, held an event that welcomed 28 amateur puppet groups from across the Carpathian Basin to Veszprém.

At the Enchanted Puppet Festival, hundreds of children showcased various forms of puppetry. We saw glove puppets, shadow plays and live-action puppet performances; accompanying programmes included a giant puppet parade, concerts, flash mobs, fire theatre and interactive games.

The festival's main venue was Agóra Veszprém Community Centre, but beyond that, locations such as ActiCity Movement Centre, the squares in Veszprém's city centre, Old Town Square, Theatre Gardens, the Cloisters and Gardens Event Venue and selected municipalities around Lake Balaton transformed into a puppet paradise.

Nothing could compare to seeing giant puppets winding through the streets of Veszprém or to the experience in Tihany, where spectators became part of a puppet show. For a few days, Veszprém and its surrounding settlements became a vibrant fairy-tale world, which we hope remains a lifelong experience for all participants.

OPENING CEREMONY

The beginning of the European Capital of Culture title year is a significant moment for any city. Therefore, from the outset, we planned not only a grand opening event but also an entire weekend's programmes to kick off the year 2023. On 21st and 22nd January 2023 we had exhibitions, walks and concerts at key locations and streets. Art enthusiasts could lose themselves in the exhibitions at House of Arts Veszprém, while KUNSZT! offered classical music concerts and family favourites such as the PomPom Party at Expresszó, algae bar and handmade delicacies tasting at Pokedli, among many other activities. In the city centre, folk music and dance performances, bar pianists and choirs entertained passers-by. The ECoC office window featured alternative music groups, jazz, blues and funk at Papírkutya, and operetta, theatre, and literature lovers found programmes to their liking at Petőfi Theatre. On 22nd January 2023, we celebrated not only the opening of the ECoC year but also the 200th anniversary of the Hungarian national anthem by focussing on literature.

SHINE! GRAND OPENING

The spectacular show opening the EKF year took place on 21st January 2023. Starting at 8 p.m., three different but interconnected stories were told by contemporary and folk dance artists on stages set up at three locations in Veszprém: Old Town Square, Kossuth Street, and the Castle.

The nearly hour-long production consisted of several consecutive, interconnected musical performances, dance pieces and musical events, and the entire show was accompanied by light projections, large-scale building projections and other impactful visual elements. The narrative showcased the past and present of Veszprém city and the region in a magical, fairy-tale-like manner, at times dreamlike, other times grotesque and humorous, celebrating the city in a form of 'urban fantasy', which even featured a giant puppet representing Queen Gizella.

The concept and script of the show were created by János Can Togay, a film director and screenwriter, and Chief Artistic and Creative Adviser of VEB2023 ECoC. Internationally renowned contemporary artists and creators participated in assembling the show's musical, dance, theatrical and other audiovisual elements, including the Glowing Bulbs visual arts collective; Yvett Bozsik, Kossuth Award-winning ballet artist and permanent member of the Immortals troupe, choreographer; Attila Pacsay, Oscar-nominated composer; Marcell Iványi, Golden Palm-winning director and producer; and Zoltán Zsuráfszky Jr., Prima Primissima Junior Award-winning, Harangozó Gyula Award-winning dancer and choreographer.

Thousands of people gathered for the Shine! opening event, filling Veszprém streets adorned with light projections and the beauty of falling snow. After the touching moments of the opening show, hundreds continued to celebrate together in Old Town Square to the tunes of Kruder & Dorfmeister.

HALFTIME FESTIVAL

As we reached the halftime point of the European Capital of Culture year, we celebrated the journey so far and prepared for the months ahead with a five-day mini-festival in mid-June. Our goal was to have an event where everyone could find something enjoyable, so we put together dozens of programmes ranging from extreme sports to a storytelling festival and pop concerts, ensuring that after the memorable opening, we could once again gather and create lasting memories together.

At Gyárkert (Factory'ard) , we enjoyed free concerts every evening from 8 p.m., featuring performances by artists like MEUTE, Tom Odell, Morcheeba and Lost Frequencies. There was also a rollerskates disco, an operetta festival and a cycling show. Halftime Festival also introduced Long Table Picnic in Veszprém Valley, an event intended to become a tradition. Thousands of us sat down at a continuous row of tables stretching 1.5 km, where we chatted and enjoyed the joys of outdoor games and togetherness on a beautiful summer day. Picnickers from both the city and the Bakony-Balaton region joined in, bringing homemade treats to the event. Throughout the day, with the help of Marcsi Borbás, we selected the most beautifully laid table and the tastiest dishes, awarding valuable prizes to the winners. Seeing the success and community-building power of Long Table Picnic, we hope this event will remain a part of the city's programme offer for many years to come.

FESTIVE SHINE – WINTER VESZPRÉM

We celebrated the start of the European Capital of Culture year and the halftime point, so it was only fitting to mark the year's end with equal grandeur. Therefore, we organised the Festive Shine event series, making the holiday season even more dazzling for the people of Veszprém and the region.

For the winter months, we organised activities such as a Christmas design fair, puppet Nativity plays, a Christkindl Spiel presentation and a themed holiday Old Town Market. Gyárkert (Factory'ard) was transformed into a winter wonderland: we built an ice rink and a tobogganing area where you could slide on snow tubes even when there was no snow in sight. Meanwhile, the enticing aromas of chimney cakes, roasted chestnuts and mulled wine attracted those who may not have wanted to participate in sports but still longed for the true winter atmosphere.

During the Advent season, we launched the Fructus Labiorum classical music concert series, allowing us to find some peace amidst the pre-Christmas hustle and bustle. At the very end of the year, we celebrated the upcoming New Year with a spectacular New Year's Eve party. Dance enthusiasts could warm up at the pre-New Year's party in ActiCity, and hundreds of us danced together in Old Town Square to the mixes of local DJs until dawn.





POSTA

























BEYOND

As a resident of Veszprém, it is very important to me what sort of legacy remains in the city after the programme year concludes – what we can continue to be proud of, and which investments, events and initiatives will endure for the enjoyment of both locals and visitors. I am delighted that in the city and the region, we have brought to life venues, spaces and model events that will continue to provide a new level of quality in the daily lives of professional and lay communities even after 2023.

Film Picnic, which has grown into one of the most prominent outdoor events in the Hungarian film world, attracts more and more industry professionals and ‘amateur’ enthusiasts to Veszprém and two other regional towns, Balatonalmádi and Balatonfüred. The Hungarian Motion Picture Festival organises film screenings and audience meet-and-greets in extraordinary locations, bringing the ‘cinema experience’ closer to viewers. And speaking of cinema: in the long-abandoned and unused Simoga House in Veszprém castle, after renovation, FOTON Audiovisual Centre now hosts concerts, screenings, discussions, workshops and audience events.

At the end of Elisabeth Grove, the former orphanage and later Heim Pál Children’s Hospital stood neglected and abandoned for decades. I am thrilled that in the VEB2023 EKF programme, this building complex has undergone a magical transformation and now, under the name ActiCity Dance and Movement Arts Centre, offers a new community space with a variety of programmes for all age groups. Among the cultural legacies, let’s not forget CODE Centre of Digital Experiences, which will open after the ECoC year, where we can enjoy visual experiences that will offer meaningful entertainment for both young and old in the future.

Krisztina Dallos
Cultural Project Manager
VEB2023 ECoC





HUNGARIAN MOTION PICTURE FESTIVAL

Starry skies, open-air cinema vibes, Lake Balaton, refreshing drinks, lovely weather and film premieres — that’s what MOZ.GO, the Hungarian Motion Picture Festival, means to us every year.

Recognising the importance of building the brand of Hungarian cinema and strengthening the relationship between the film industry and the audience, as well as connecting to the tradition of Veszprém’s television festival, we reimagined the celebration of Hungarian films in collaboration with the National Film Institute. Combining the carefree lakeside atmosphere of the highly successful 2020 Film Picnic with the decades-long Budapest-based ‘Show’ the Hungarian Motion Picture Festival was born in 2021.

The new location brought new energy to the festival, introducing Hungarian films to new audiences in the country’s most popular holiday region. Perhaps the festival’s greatest allure is the opportunity to watch the latest Hungarian films on Lake Balaton promenades, beaches or even within the walls of Veszprém Castle.

In June 2023, we held the celebration of domestic films for the third time in partnership with the National Film Institute. Fans of Hungarian cinema and industry professionals had the chance to watch nearly a hundred Hungarian films across nine venues in three cities: Veszprém, Balatonfüred, and Balatonalmádi. In addition to screenings, attendees enjoyed meet-and-greet events, concerts and children’s programmes.

As in previous years, several awards were presented at the 2023 festival, including the Hungarian Motion Picture Awards and the prizes for the Cinemira children’s film competition. The festival also featured numerous film premieres and, as is customary, showcased classic Hungarian films that laid the foundation for Hungary’s cinematic heritage decades ago.

INTERVIEW

3 QUESTIONS TO ÁKOS PESTI, DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION SUPPORT AT THE NATIONAL FILM INSTITUTE

Since 2021, the Hungarian Motion Picture Festival has been all about Hungarian films. Audiences can watch premieres and classic works in Veszprém and towns on Lake Balaton, along with many additional programmes such as meet-and-greet events talk, and concerts.

Why do you think it’s important for a country to have a film festival like the Hungarian Motion Picture Festival?

When we launched the Motion Picture Festival, our primary aim was to create an event where the audience and industry professionals could watch the latest film productions in a single setting, providing a summary and celebrating the works in a worthy environment. Beyond supporting the production of films, the Film Institute also works to create new opportunities for showcasing and distributing Hungarian films. We don’t want to accept that films simply run in cinemas, are broadcast on TV, and then are forgotten. A festival, with its celebratory atmosphere, the presence of filmmakers and audience interactions, provides an excellent platform to reach those who might miss out on Hungarian films through conventional channels. Additionally, I consider the Motion Picture Festival important as a professional forum where we can come together, discover new talents, and where young filmmakers can meet the industry’s greats.

The festival also awards the Hungarian Film Awards. Are there any particularly important criteria to consider during the judging process?

I can’t and don’t want to step out of my role. As Director of Production at the Film Institute, one of my primary criteria is the professional quality of execution, which naturally also involves how the film, as a work of art can engage, captivate and elevate

the viewer. Filmmaking is particularly exciting as an expressive medium because subjectivity plays a significant role on the audience's side as well.

What advice would you give to festival-goers on how to approach the numerous programmes?

I recommend going beyond just attending full-length feature films and daring to explore other formats as cinema experiences. The selections in short films, animation, documentaries and TV films offer equally exciting, original and substantial works.

ACTICITY DANCE AND MOVEMENT ARTS CENTRE

The buildings of the former Heim Pál Children's Hospital stood empty and disused for over 20 years until the opportunity arose for their revitalisation through European Capital of Culture title. ActiCity, located in Veszprém city centre, has become a cultural hub that provides both space and training and performance opportunities for the city's dance and movement arts groups, which used to operate in multiple, cramped locations. Here, classical ballet, various ballroom and folk dance formations and contemporary, trendy movement forms like rhythmic gymnastics or rock climbing can operate in one place, economically and self-sufficiently. The building complex also offers opportunities for developing children's movement skills, while parents can spend their time usefully by engaging in sports, enjoying a coffee in the newly established café, or strolling through the rejuvenated English park. In addition, a co-working office has been established at ActiCity, and there are event rooms there that have already hosted several city events during the European Capital of Culture year, and hopefully will continue to do so in the coming years. Among others, in 2023 we held the Ballet Grand Prix here, one of the venues for the Magic Puppet Festival was also ActiCity, and some concerts, exhibitions and the design fair of the Festive Shine winter programme series found their home here as well.

FOTON AUDIOVISUAL CENTRE AND FIXIR DIGITAL EXHIBITION SPACE AND LAB

Located in Veszprém Castle, at 17 Vár Street, the former Baroque-era outbuilding, the stables of Simoga House — which is under heritage protection — operated as Várkert restaurant in recent decades. Since the restaurant's closure, the building stood empty, its condition continuously deteriorating until it was renovated with support from the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme.

The house not only has a lecture hall equipped with the most modern technology, but almost every inch of space is suitable for holding events and functions. FOTON Audiovisual Centre invites the audience not only for film screenings but also serves as a venue for thematic discussions, acoustic concerts, book launches and meet-the-artist events in its café, alongside art and photography exhibitions.

In the building's basement, the digital workshop of House of Arts Veszprém, fIxIr Workshop, has been set up, where those interested in digital arts can participate in exciting workshops, and temporary media art exhibitions can also be viewed here.

The ornamental garden of the former Simoga House's hanging gardens serves as a quiet, intimate retreat area, but it is also ideal for occasional outdoor events—many programmes took place here during the 2023 European Capital of Culture year, such as some events of the Balkan:MOST Festival.

DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Robotics, virtual reality, automation, artificial intelligence — these are the most advanced achievements of the 21st century that visitors from Veszprém and the surrounding region can experience up close at the Digital Knowledge Centre in downtown Veszprém. As digital tools rapidly evolve and digital thinking has become a part of our everyday lives, it is important for both young and old to become familiar with this branch of culture.

Primarily aimed at school-age children and young adults, this educational and entertainment centre — housed in a building that previously served as a school and even a meat store near Kossuth Street — immerses young people in the world of digitalisation through a range of workshops and creative activities. Moreover, in summer camps, children can become even more intensely involved in digital activities. Among other things, young people can program robots, explore the mysteries of 3D printing and get closer to the world of artificial intelligence.

RUTTNER HOUSE

Ruttner House, located at 8 Jókai Street, was once the home of the Ruttner merchant family. This nearly 200-year-old residence had been neglected in the heart of the city for decades until it reopened in 2022 with a new appearance and new functions, thanks to the Veszprém-Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture programme.

The building complex, which is under heritage protection and where Romanticism, Classicism and modernity meet, has been transformed into a hostel, actively integrating Ruttner House into the city's tourism. Here, everyone — from school groups to individual tourists — has the opportunity to find accommodation in one of the central areas of Veszprém.

Additionally, the building serves another important function: it houses the Dungeon Visitor Centre, which opened in spring 2023. Visitors can purchase tickets here for the renovated Castle Dungeon exhibition and can directly access the prison from this location.

Dungeon Visitor Centre and Exhibition

In April 2023, the Dungeon Visitor Centre and the renovated Castle Prison officially opened their doors. Here, visitors can explore the relationship between crime and punishment, the evolution of criminal justice and the history of the Veszprém Castle Dungeon Prison through the permanent exhibition entitled 'The Human Behind Bars'.

This 21st-century interactive exhibition engages all our senses: smells, images and sounds guide us into a bleak and often sad world, prompting us to ponder moral questions like who is considered guilty and when someone has truly paid for their crime.

The exhibition also examines how crimes have been judged throughout different eras, showcases some of the most memorable escape attempts, traces the centuries-long changes in torture and corporal punishment and offers insights into the construction of former prison cells.

CODE CENTRE OF DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

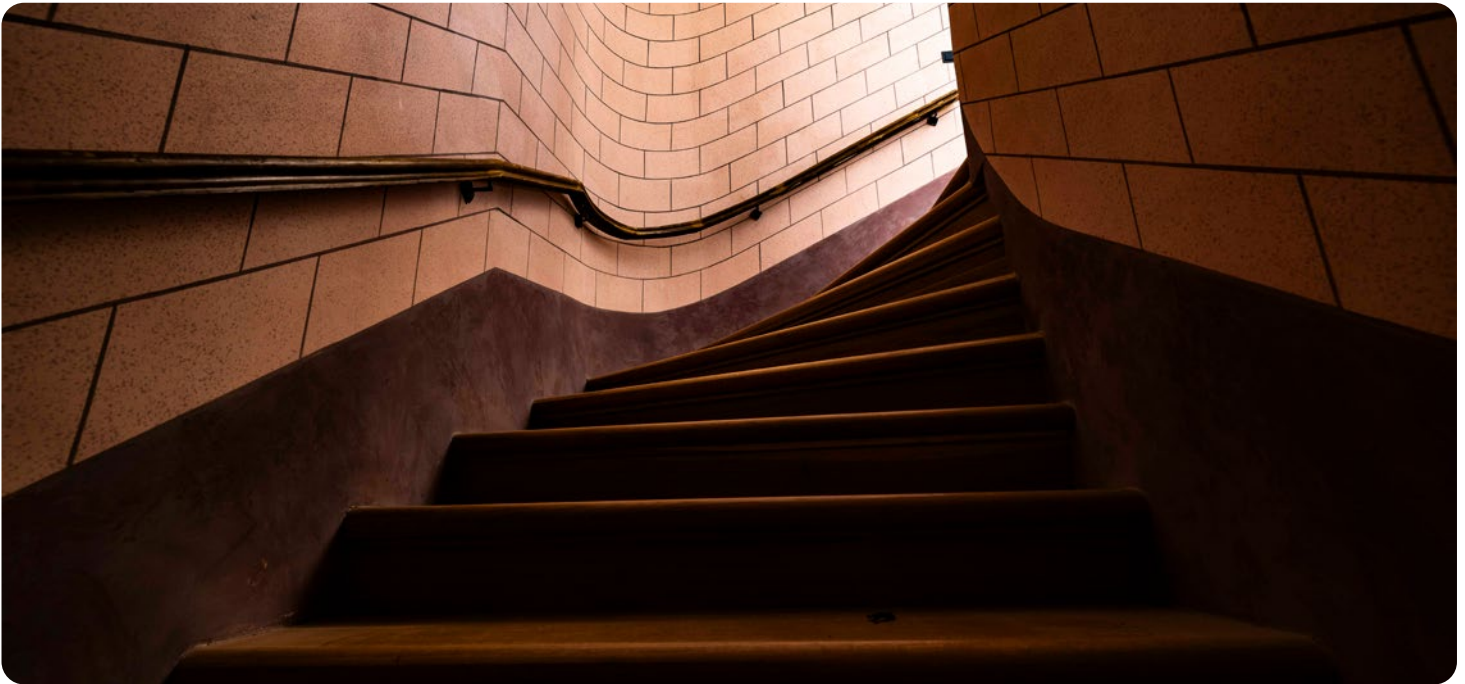
The CODE Centre of Digital Experiences is an institution designed to present immersive digital content, housed in the former Veszprém County Community Centre building.

Immersive visual and audio spaces, created primarily with high-end projectors, offer an all-encompassing, captivating experience that has become one of the most popular international attractions. These spaces are found in many European countries as well as in North America, Asia, Japan and the Middle East. Veszprém is now joining this trend.

After the building's renovation, visitors are welcomed into various experience spaces. The Exhibition Space on the ground floor will host both permanent and temporary digital and analogue installations. The first floor's approximately 400-square-metre, hexagonal former theatre, the Hexagon, will primarily serve as a venue for 360-degree immersive projected performances. The Hexagon is also planned to host hybrid events such as theatre and music performances accompanied by projections. The former stage and backstage area has been converted into a roughly 60-square-metre room, the Studio, which will accommodate interactive 180-degree and 3D projections and presentations for up to 25-30 visitors.

CODE's explicit goal is to create a modern cultural tourist attraction based on today's technologies, capable of keeping Veszprém continuously in the spotlight through a unique, regionally unparalleled attraction. This will be achieved through constantly renewing and temporary exhibitions that showcase the works of major international artists alongside the giants of Hungarian visual and photographic art, offering a strikingly new opportunity for educational and scientific dissemination. It will also provide exciting interactive 3D and VR experiences for children.















THE LEGACY OF THE VESZPRÉM-BALATON 2023 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE PROGRAMME

WHAT HAS THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE YEAR LEFT US?

Gyula Porga
Mayor of Veszprém



A legacy is only valuable if there is a degree of harmony between the one who leaves it and the one who inherits it. They pay attention to each other. They understand each other. They have empathy for one another.

If this ideal state doesn't occur, what remains after the heir — though it might not be an immediate disaster — is often just a collection of useless clutter waiting to be discarded.

I believe we are fortunate for two reasons. Firstly, because we are inheriting from ourselves. This greatly aids the harmony between the one who leaves the legacy and the one who inherits it. Secondly, because we didn't organise the European Capital of Culture project for its own sake or for its grandeur, but to bring us closer to the future we desire.

When we applied, when we won, and when we prepared for 2023, our goal was to ensure that the changes would meet community needs, be useful and impose a manageable burden on the future.

We did nothing for its own sake, for aesthetic pleasure, or to win favour with the European Union or the government. Every decision we made was with our future heirs in mind. In other words, we thought only of ourselves, the people of Veszprém.

Were we selfish? Very much so!

We didn't focus on how to please others. Instead, we asked ourselves what is missing from our lives that we can work to create.

For years, we examined Veszprém's structural problems, considered what investments could improve the quality of life and brainstormed ideas to enhance the well-being of the people of Veszprém.

Our most visible successes include ActiCity, created from a decaying children's hospital; Gyárkert (Factory'ard), a community space developed from a former furniture factory site; and the digital experience centre integrated into the former Dimitrov community centre, which will offer unique services to

both residents and visitors in Europe. I am particularly proud of the promenade that connects our modernised music school with our new movement centre, as we managed to open up the university's previously closed areas and build shared community and playground spaces with the city.

I could go on listing the renovated buildings and modernised systems, such as community transport.

The key point is that we didn't think in terms of isolated development projects, but rather in terms of the city's overall accessibility, openness, habitability and liveability — just as people try to adapt their homes to their lifestyles and habits, sometimes by tearing down walls, at other times by sealing off doors or dividing rooms.

While making structural transformations and eliminating neglected areas, we also tried to remember that a legacy should not only be embodied in roads, buildings and spaces, but also in the initiation of community- and identity-building customs, events and the creation of new traditions. This is why we gave flags to city districts or initiated Long Table picnic. This is why we brought the biggest celebration of Hungarian film to Veszprém or created literary weekends for our clubs and cafés.

Everything we did was to offer Veszprém more opportunities than it had before and make it a more attractive destination for tourists. We planned everything so that the changes would become part of the fabric of the city. So that they would stay with us.

Of course, the question remains: will the legacy of the European Capital of Culture earn the recognition of its heirs? But let's not rush to any conclusions! Let's leave the answer to time.

Alíz Markovits

CEO, Veszprém-Balaton 2023 Jsc.



With the title of European Capital of Culture, Veszprém and the Bakony-Balaton region were given the opportunity to showcase their unique cultural treasures to Europe and the world. We got to know the region's towns and villages from a completely new perspective, revealing the diversity hidden in both small villages and larger towns. Thanks to the programmes, we experienced how culture can take root in the most unexpected places and unconventional spaces, showing us that a forest, an abandoned power plant or the ruins of a church can become the venue for a concert, a theatre performance or even an entire festival.

In recent times, these communities have come to perceive and realise the wealth surrounding them, and I believe this has brought a sense of openness to the region's life. Processes have been set in motion, enabling communities to adopt unconventional solutions more boldly. Moreover, it is important to note that communities have also discovered each other's values, leading to numerous collaborations between villages and towns. As a result, positive energies have been generated in connection with the European Capital of Culture title, providing long-term momentum for the region.

The work carried out by the participating towns and villages during the preparation and the title year was extremely focussed and constructive. The cultural offer is no longer aimed only at visitors but also enriches the everyday lives of the local communities. Our Pajta (Barn) Programme and CultNet bases have further strengthened local community cohesion and identity, brought creative groups together and allowed visitors to become more engaged in the daily life of these settlements.

Both programmes were also good opportunities for the cultural communities of the Bakony-Balaton region to gain greater visibility, marking an important milestone in overcoming seasonality.

The institutions of Veszprém and the region have gained unique opportunities and experiences that will help provide a high-quality cultural offer not only during the programme year but also in the long term. We are very proud that our '10 Months-10

Challenges' preparation was among the 2023 winners of the Green Destinations TOP100 Sustainable Tourism Good Practices competition. Additionally, House of Arts Veszprém became a Family-Friendly Workplace, Petőfi Theatre Veszprém received a Green Certificate award, and Eötvös Károly County Library became the first dog-friendly library in Hungary.

Our programme has strengthened cooperation among our cultural institutions, providing a dynamic boost to the city's daily life and tourism. The introduction of a unified ticketing system and the Veszprém Card for local residents have further encouraged local cultural consumption.

Behind all this is a very complex decision-support monitoring system that provides real-time data and figures, underpinning the success of our programmes or helping to address their shortcomings.

This has made it clear that our efforts to revitalise Veszprém's historic downtown have been successful. Through the new shops, community spaces, and essential services opened as part of the Street Management Programme, the city centre's streets and squares have once again come to life, adding a new vibrancy to Veszprém's daily life. The proof that this works is that in 2023, 1.66 million people visited the historic city centre.

And what is the most important lesson the European Capital of Culture title has left us? The collaborations that opened doors to each other and the world, where we realised that together, we are more, and that these collaborations can open up new horizons in the future. It is crucial for locals to remain active in their communities, to continue strengthening their local identity and to be proud of their communities, hometowns, cultural treasures and heritage in the long run.

Anyone who visits Veszprém or the Bakony-Balaton region now will feel the spirit of the place. It is evident that this is a good place where locals themselves feel comfortable.

Perhaps this is the single most important thing the European Capital of Culture title could give us.





