

## Open space

### **“Festivals Open Doors. Open Minds. Build Societies!”**

Festivals have a big role to play in issues of social inclusion. The “Open the Door” project, initiated by the European Festivals Association (EFA), is about increasing awareness of how the arts and culture can contribute to social transformation. Among various ways of removing barriers to culture, they mentioned special ticketing policies, free performances, and targeted projects where artists work with particular social groups.

*Kathrin Deventer is EFA’s Secretary General:*

“We believe arts and culture play an essential role in the building of societies. Festivals are deeply rooted in local contexts and they contribute to changing mind-sets.”

*Galin Stoev is a Bulgarian stage director:*

“I don’t believe artists can fight poverty. That’s an intellectual concept. We can’t save society as a whole, but we can save individuals. How does one push an individual’s limits? That should be our main preoccupation as artists.

“I don’t believe we should address poor people as a distinct group, and say that because you are poor we are doing this or that for you. We must address people because they are human beings!”

*Jelle Dierickx is a Belgian musicologist:*

Asked whether festivals can have a social role and engage in social values, he says: “That’s exactly what they’re doing.”

“We have to make sure that politicians know they need us, and not vice versa. If you’ve got two coins you should use one to buy bread

and one to buy flowers. We have to convince politicians of that." He concludes: "Real poverty is poverty of thinking! The richness of Europe is that we can fight and debate."