

## **Borderland Workshop** Three inspirational animators

**Dragan Klaić** (1950-2011) was a recognized authority in the fields of cultural policy and international cultural cooperation in Europe. He was also an analyst of contemporary cultural institutions and internationally honoured theatrologist.

Klaić lectured at Leiden University, the University of Bologna, the University of Belgrade, and Istanbul University. He was the creator and director of the European Festival Research Project, and an initiative devoted to cultural studies of European festivals and the ongoing 'festivalization' of life.

Dragan Klaić was born in Sarajevo in 1950. A graduate of theater studies and history, he was one of the founders of the European Theater Quarterly *Euromaske*, and the director of the Theater Instituut Nederland, the European Network of Information for the Performing Arts (IETM), and the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (currently Culture Action Europe).

He was the author of the report "Europe as a Cultural Project" as well as numerous articles and books. His latest published work is titled "Mobility of Imagination, a Companion Guide to International Cultural Cooperation".

*View him talking about cultural identity and the role of festivals in a city's life at <http://vimeo.com/15558617>*

## **Juliano Mer Khamis**

(commemoration article, April 4, 2012)

A year ago today the actor, director and activist Juliano Mer Khamis, was shot dead as he left the compound of The Freedom Theatre in Jenin, Palestine.

His death came at a time when uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt were demonstrating that liberation is achievable, that revolution is a word that holds meaning beyond the metaphorical, and that mass political strength can surge across borders. It was a bitter reminder of how frail such strength can seem in the face of one man with a gun.

Juliano co-founded [The Freedom Theatre](#) as a means of 'joining, by all means, the liberation struggle of the Palestinians, which is our liberation struggle'. His border-defying identity, which he came to define as '100% Palestinian and 100% Jewish', was expressive of a politics that was radical in its refusal to relinquish either the stance of empathy and openness, or utter commitment to resistance. Juliano was a man standing his ground with his arms wide open.

The Freedom Theatre is also a continuation of the legacy of Arna Mer, Juliano's mother, who ran an educational project for children in the Jenin refugee camp until her death in 1995. Jul captured the depth of the relationship between Arna and the people she worked with in his film [Arna's Children](#).

In the year since his death The Freedom Theatre has not stood still, even in grief. New projects are underway such as [The Freedom Bus](#), a particularly Freedom Theatre take on the segregation-busting Freedom Rides. Juliano's border-defying identity by no means died with him.

*View the documentary *Arna's Children* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IVrM5hBhvM>*

**Frie Leysen (Brussels)**

Festival-maker Frie Leysen is considered one of the most experienced personalities within the international theatre scene. At a point when the ongoing conflict between the Flemish and the Walloons was coming to a head, she worked consistently and successfully with artistic means towards integration and understanding. In 1994 she founded the multi-disciplinary *Kunstenfestivaldesarts*, which she continued to run with great success for more than ten years, and which developed into one of the most influential international festivals in Europe. More recently Frie Leysen's cultural research has concentrated on the Arabic-speaking world; she curated the festival *Meeting Points 5* in eleven different cities and presented artists from theatre, dance, visual arts, film, video and music. Frie Leysen was the first international programme director appointed by *Theater der Welt 2010*.

*Read an interview with her at*

[http://performingarts.jp/E/pre\\_interview/0904/1.html](http://performingarts.jp/E/pre_interview/0904/1.html)