EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE

30 YEARS

From top to bottom, left to right:
1. Maribor, Placebo ali Komu potok solz ne lije, Photo: Dejan Bulut
2. Essen for the Ruhr, Eröffnung close encounter by Joeressen and Kessner, Photo: Rupert Oberh Ñuser
3. Guimarães, CIAJG Center of Arts José de Guimarães, Photo: Paulo Pacheco
4. Essen for the Ruhr, Tiger & Turtle, Photo: Manfred Vollmer
5. Aarhus, Rethink Landscape, Photo: Thomas Rühlin
6. Maribor, rne maske, Photo: Mediaspeed
7. Maribor, Klovbuf, Photo: Pat Verbruggen
8. Guimarães, La Fura dels Baus - opening show, Photo: João Peixoto
9. Maribor, Chouf Ouchouf, Photo: Mario de Curto
10. Marseille-Provence, MUCEM / © R.Ricciotti and R. Carta Architects
11. Umeå, Old pianos transformed into playable pieces of art by Marc Strömberg, Photo: Eugenio della Morra
12. Turku, Parade Carpet by Meiju Niskala, Photo: Tuukka Kaila
13. Maribor, Culturel embrassies, Italy, Photo: Miha Sagadin
14. Maribor, Gora okrog tube, Photo: MP Produkcija
15. Essen for the Ruhr, Symphony of Thousend, Photo: MichaleKneffel
16. Guimarães, platform for Arts and Creativity, Photo: Paulo Pacheco
17. Turku, Eurocultured Festival, Street Art by Aryz , Photo: Kari Vainioi

Foreword

Tibor Navracsics, European Union Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

Over the past 30 years, the European Capitals of Culture have grown into one of the most ambitious cultural projects in Europe. And they have become one of the best known — and most appreciated — activities of the European Union (EU).

The original motivation of the project —started in 1985 on the initiative of the then Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri — is still very much valid: to bring citizens of the European Union (or the European Community, as it was then called) closer together.

By providing opportunities for Europeans to meet and discover the great cultural diversity of our continent and to take a fresh look at our common history and values, the European Capitals of Culture promote mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue among citizens and increase their sense of belonging to a community.

The European Capitals of Culture remain first and foremost a cultural event. Cultural activity in these cities increases, new audiences can be reached and the city's cultural operators can acquire a more international outlook and thus improve their skills and professionalism. The European Capitals of Culture also contribute to forging an image of an attractive and creative Europe open to cultures from across the world.

Being a European Capital of Culture can also boost the long-term socioeconomic development of cities. They often take this opportunity to regenerate themselves, improve their creative and innovative potential, develop new and more sustainable forms of tourism and raise their profile. Being a European Capital of Culture can also foster social and territorial cohesion within city boundaries and beyond, strengthen citizens' roles in the city's development as well as their participation in the shaping and making of cultural expressions.

This brochure showcases successful projects in recent European Capitals of Culture. They show that the European Capitals of Culture have become laboratories of strategic investment in culture, benefiting our economies and our societies as a whole.

The European Capitals of Culture are an integral part of the Creative Europe programme 2014–20, whose ambition is to promote Europe's cultural diversity and cultural heritage and to reinforce the competitiveness of our cultural and creative sectors. Creative Europe helps artists, cultural professionals and cultural organisations to adapt to the digital age and globalisation, work across borders and reach as many people as possible in Europe and beyond. It also supports efforts to improve access to finance through the setting-up of a new financial guarantee facility.

I am pleased to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the European Capitals of Culture, and I invite you to discover more on the following pages.

European Capitals of Culture: 30 years of achievements

Thirty years old in 2015, the European Capitals of Culture initiative remains fresh and vigorous, highly popular with cities and citizens across the European Union. It is now a prestigious and fully mature year-long international event with an established place in global cultural calendars.

Over and over again throughout those 30 years, the European Capitals of Culture have highlighted the richness of cultures in Europe, and allowed European citizens to share celebrations of their diversity. Millions of Europeans have also been offered a new sense of belonging to a common cultural area — and millions, in the more than 50 cities that have taken part, have had the chance to show off the local places and customs and events that they take pride in.

The European Capitals of Culture can also deliver in terms of prosperity and quality of life for the cities that take part. Culture has become more closely integrated into the long-term development of many of the participating cities. And the cities have in turn benefited from regeneration and new infrastructure, a higher international profile, increased tourism — and an enhanced image in the eyes of their own inhabitants. Participation in the European Capitals of Culture programme has frequently helped achieve many policy goals at regional and national level, too.

From its earliest days, it offered a platform for creativity. The idea of designating an annual 'European City of Culture' was first proposed by the Greek Culture Minister, Melina Mercouri, in 1983, long before culture was elevated into an

explicit EU policy. And the first city to hold the title was Athens, in 1985. Glasgow in 1990, Antwerp in 1993 and Copenhagen in 1996, to name just a few, conspicuously demonstrated just how much could be done.

Progressively, a sequence of refinements in the processes for choosing cities, and in monitoring and evaluating their performance, have helped to raise the level of professionalism in the preparation and execution of the events. Milestones include the competitive bid process introduced in 1999, and the guarantee since 2005 of a minimum of four years' lead-in time — a development that has inspired still bolder ambition. With the growth of the profile of the European Capitals of Culture, the bid process itself has become a high-profile event in its own right. And increasingly,

Guimarães 2012 —
Renascer 'Time to be reborn' —
photographer: *José Caldeira*

the initiative has fostered the development of an aspirational vision that goes beyond celebration, and embraces transformation. Being a European Capital of Culture has become a catalyst for a wider change in the perception of a city — both by its own residents, and by the world beyond.

At the same time, a trend has emerged for activities to have an impact that is felt not only in the cultural sphere, but spreads into the social, educational, urban-planning and even economic and regional dimensions. Programmes have deliberately sought to widen engagement across more diverse audiences — particularly in parts of a city or segments of its population that do not represent customary customers for cultural events. Involving local populations actively in the creation and conduct of events has also become a matter of routine, and the deployment of 'citizen volunteers' has cemented many of the cities' programmes into the consciousness of the local population. The 'life cycle' of each European Capital of Culture programme has evolved too. Nowadays,

six years before their title year, two Member States of the European Union invite applications from the cities on their territory that might be interested in bidding for the honour. Over the course of the following two years, the applications are reviewed by a panel of independent experts in the field of culture, who recommend one city in each Member State for the title. These are then formally designated as the European Capitals of Culture four years ahead of the relevant year, permitting extensive and detailed planning and preparation. The panel, supported by the European Commission, continues to offer advice and guidance to designated cities on the evolving preparations until the hosting year. Finally, at the end of the European Capitals of Culture year, an evaluation report is prepared for and published by the European Commission. EU funding of the European Capitals of Culture initiative has also increased over the years. It amounts now to EUR 1.5 million for each chosen city, in the form of the Melina Mercouri Prize, which is awarded in light of the outcomes of each city's preparation.

Umeå 2014 —
Closing ceremony, Northern light —
photographer: *Fredrik Larsson*

Riga 2014 —
Chain of book lovers —
photographer: *Martins Otto*

During its evolution, the programme has encouraged a stronger commitment towards more closely-defined and locally-sensitive vision statements. It is important that the programmes not only correspond to the ambitions of the planners but also sit comfortably with the city's own population. This requires an acute consciousness of local culture — in every sense of the word — to ensure that the content of the programme and the creation or import of new cultural activities win the support of local communities, rather than generate disruption and associated tensions.

Bringing 'European added value' to the event has always been an obligatory theme for aspirants. For cities, it means connecting their local context with the European framework, but also being locally meaningful while appealing at European and international levels. This has resulted in presenting events featuring European artists, collaborations, co-productions, and exchanges between artists and cultural organisations across Europe. At its best, this cooperation has a strong rationale — often

Riga 2014 —
Musical light show —
photographer: *Martins Otto*

based on a pre-existing geographical, historical or more personal links. The European dimension can also be explored through developing European themes and issues or celebrating aspects of European history, identity, shared values and heritage. Sometimes this has taken the form of presenting old themes in fresh ways, or revealing hidden aspects of a European connection — or even tackling difficult themes that resonate across the continent. Specific partnerships between cities have also offered scope for new reflections and new relations.

And of course the promotion of tourism across Europe, attracting visitors from other Member States or beyond, automatically reinforces the European significance of a city's event.

Candidates — and winners — have faced up to the challenge of communicating a vision for the event, and of setting goals, especially for the longer term, as is evident from the sustainable legacy planning that has become a growing feature of programmes.

The Directorate-General for Education and Culture, the responsible department of the European Commission, has supported the process, producing a guide for candidate cities, and a series of information days at which potential candidates can learn more about the logistics of organising a bid. It has also fine-tuned the presumptions and mechanisms at the heart of measuring success for the programme.

The programme is already looking ahead to the next 20 years. On 14 April 2014,

acting on a proposal by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a decision for a new action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033. The aims are largely unchanged — to safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe, to highlight the common features that they share, and to foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities. The main features would also be retained — equal opportunities for all Member States, geographical balance, a strong European dimension, and the inclusion of all citizens in all neighbourhoods of the city in the project. There will be an increased focus on the need for candidate and winning cities to better embed their

European Capitals of Culture project into their overall cultural strategy as a way to produce a sustainable cultural, social and economic legacy. And additional support will be made available to cities during the preparation period. It will also be possible for a city in a candidate country or potential candidate for EU membership to hold the title every third year as of 2021.

Although it is now one of the longest-running EU initiatives, the European Capitals of Culture remain relevant — as may be seen by the continuing intense interest. In the competition for the 2016 edition, 16 Spanish cities and 11 Polish cities expressed a desire to become their country's European Capitals of Culture, and engaged in a fiercely

competitive bidding process. And the following quotation from late 2014 — from Androulla Vassiliou, the former European Commissioner responsible for education, culture, multilingualism and youth, on the recommendation of Matera as European Capital of Culture in 2019 — is self-explanatory: 'I congratulate Matera on its successful bid. The competition for the title in Italy was one of the strongest ever, with 21 initial contenders narrowed down to six finalists. This number is a testimony of the immense popularity of this European Union initiative. I am confident that Matera will attract more visitors from Europe and all over the world to discover the city, its history and the cultural diversity which is one of the strengths of our continent.'
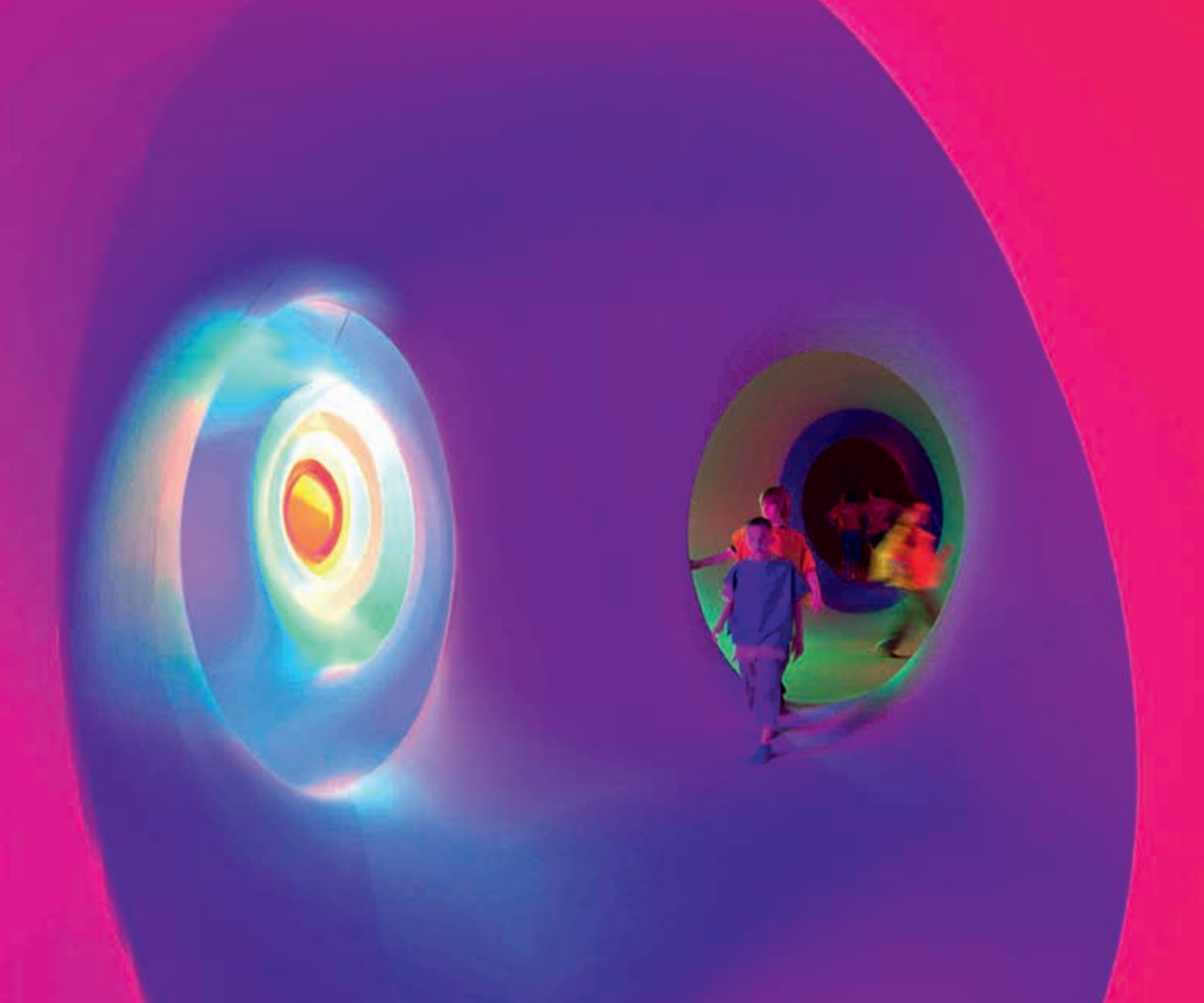
A high-profile cultural event

The concept of culture has taken on new meaning with the European Capitals of Culture. Not just high culture — although there has been plenty of that. The capitals have demonstrated Europe's capacity for defining culture in the broadest possible sense — and for giving it a high profile too. In recent years, the chosen cities have promoted culture in so many of its facets, from the most refined miniatures to the most spectacular public events. And in giving culture that high profile, it has repeatedly breathed new life into a city's cultural consciousness.

Marseille-Provence (France) mounted one of the most extensive and wide-ranging programmes — culturally and geographically — of any European Capitals of Culture to date, creating numerous opportunities for citizens to attend, to take part in or sometimes also to co-create cultural events stretched across several cities and a wide territory. Altogether it featured some 950 projects, including an exhibition of Cézanne, van Gogh and Bonnard in Marseille and in Aix-en-Provence that was seen by nearly half-a-million people.

But Marseille-Provence also took new approaches to culture, such as moving 3 000 sheep across the region in commemoration of the summer tradition of transhumance, reminding the urban population of its earlier pastoral roots as the flocks converged on the city centre in the final stages of the event. Stavanger (Norway) adopted a different approach to taking advantage of the physical environment — staging an aerial ballet against a dramatic rockface.

The more conventional forms of culture have also featured prominently, but often associated with a touch of modernity. In Turku (Finland), the world premiere of the opera 'Eerik XIV', specially commissioned from composer Mikko Heiniö, inaugurated the new main hall for performances. Appropriately, it depicts the life of the 16th century Swedish king who cherished dreams of a civilized Europe, once proposed to Elizabeth I of England, and afterwards lived happily with his peasant Finnish wife in Turku castle.

In Essen for the Ruhr (Germany), a performance of Gustav Mahler's eighth symphony — the 'Symphony of a thousand' — was given exactly 100 years after the premiere, under the baton of Lorin Maazel,

and with more than 800 singers and more than 150 musicians on stage, including almost all the philharmonic orchestras of the Ruhr region and 28 choirs.

The balance between high culture and local culture found different forms of expression from city to city. Košice (Slovakia) took cultural events beyond the mainstream of the city centre by making imaginative use of a former barracks and of neighbourhood heat exchange stations, renovating them for local art events. To maximise the impact, it began many of these cultural activities during the development phase of its European Capital of Culture year, as part of a long-term process that included the use of local groups in innovative art forms. But other Košice events included celebrations of the work of the son of Slovakia, Andy

Warhol, and gestures of multicultural inspiration, paying tribute to Slovak–Hungarian and Roma heritage or the Mazal Tov Jewish festival. There was experimental dance and opera, and there were high-profile performances, including the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and works by Krzysztof Penderecki. And Jordi Savall, the renowned viola da gamba player, conductor and composer, brought his early music ensemble Le Concert des Nations to perform Haydn's 'Seven last words of our saviour on the cross' in St Elisabeth's Cathedral.

Most cities mounted events with a specific link to their own historic culture. Guimarães (Portugal), closely associated with the emergence of the Portuguese national identity in the 12th century, and with a rich

architectural heritage, had exhibitions and a competition on architecture, which was a strong focus of the overall programme.

Others moved into entirely new territory for culture. Pécs (Hungary) created a brand new state-of-the-art auditorium, which featured concerts of a wide range of music and spectacles during the year.

And others deliberately courted controversy, generating vivid public debate about the role of art. The sculpture 'Embankment arch' created in Vilnius (Lithuania) by Vladas Urbanavicius led to widespread reflections on the relationship between local people and contemporary art.

Perhaps above all, it is the performances that leave the strongest impression, and

Stavanger 2008 —
Project Bandaloop aerial ballet —
photographer: *Asle Haukland*

Essen for the Ruhr 2010 —
Symphony of a thousand —
photographer: *Manfred Vollmer*

imprint themselves onto the cultural consciousness of a city long after the year has closed — such as Maribor's (Slovenia) opening production of its year with Marij Kogoj's opera 'Black masks' performed by the joint ensembles of the Maribor and Ljubljana National Theatres.

Taking culture outdoors in huge popular celebrations is a frequent element in European Capitals of Culture. Mons (Belgium) opened its year with a ceremony of light, flame and colour — and although culture is much more than fireworks and lightshows — as Mons, Marseille-Provence and Stavanger (among many other cities) demonstrated, events like that can give culture a high profile too.

Turku 2011 —
Eurocultured Festival —
photographer: *Kari Vainio*

Maribor 2012 —
Cultural Embassies, Mexico —
photographer: *Miha Sagadin*

A European event

The programme is not entitled 'European Capitals of Culture' by accident. It is central to the concept that the cities chosen do not exist in a vacuum: they are part of Europe too, as their designation affirms. Every city that is selected has had to demonstrate in its proposal how it intends to fulfil this aspect of its role, reinforcing elements of Europe's common cultural features and values as well as showcasing the huge diversity of cultures in Europe.

Not that this is a problem for them. The complex evolution of Europe means that there is hardly any city within it that has not, at one time or another, been the location for a moment in Europe's history, or the place of birth or passage for one

of the pageant of personalities who have shaped Europe, or reflected a cultural or artistic movement or influence that has contributed to the Europe we know today. Consequently, the European Capitals of Culture have frequently drawn on previous links to lend that European dimension to their programme.

In Essen for the Ruhr, where the region's mythology is set against a backdrop of coal and steel, even the influence of industrial history on its culture was celebrated, with the mine museum.

And in its 'Moving Europe' programme, tribute was paid to the 150 years of migration — from Belgium, England, France, Italy, Portugal, Prussia, Scotland, Silesia and Turkey — that was largely triggered by the region's industry, and which has led to some 170 different nations and regions represented among the population there, in one of Europe's largest conurbations. In Essen, the mosque was opened to visitors, giving them an insight into a religion that has come from afar to embed itself into German culture too.

Pécs also reflected the multicultural dimension of Europe. Its principal message was 'opening the gate to the multiculturality of the Balkans'. The city itself is an example of a multicultural past and present of the region, with the Pasha Gazi Kaszami Mosque in the main square, German influences (Pécs and its region are now the most important cultural centre of the German minority in Hungary), ethnic minorities (including Bulgarian, Greek, Polish and Serbian) and its Roma education system.

Links to Europe need not be historical or pre-existing, either. The energy of Europe's contemporary culture also offers rich grounds for novel connections and innovative approaches to celebrating its diversity, in promoting co-productions or collaborative works between partners from different countries, establishing new partnerships and highlighting new comparisons and contrasts.

In some cases, the European aspect has been expressed in links developed between cities, in particular, between cities that have shared the title of European Capital of Culture. Some of the Marseille-Provence operators formed partnerships with operators in Košice. Košice created collaborative activities with Marseille-Provence, and set up new cross-border cooperation with Krakow and with Hungary. Members of the Košice team moved to work for Pilsen (Czech Republic), and Guimarães built up bonds with Maribor, while Mons hosts eight European and non-European cities — Tokyo, Casablanca, Montreal/Quebec, Milan, Lille, Pilsen, London and Melbourne — for 11 days each, for a programme mixing cultural performances and residences, concerts and gastronomy.

Programmes specifically created to promote the exchange of artists have also been created. Košice provided support for mobility of artists and exchanges across Europe, with an artists-in-residence programme that allowed Košice artists to visit other countries, and international artists to visit Košice. Vilnius operated a European School of Arts that offered creative workshops and residencies for young artists, and cooperation between schools of art from many parts of Europe.

Sometimes the European dimension took the form of distinct facets of Europe being brought to the selected city. Two thirds of the operators in the programme of Marseille-Provence had an explicit European and international character — ranging from outdoor readings of regional and Mediterranean authors to the Villa Méditerranée, a dramatic new building on the waterfront, as an international centre for Mediterranean dialogue and exchange. In Košice, 15 countries were represented during the opening and closing ceremonies. The Turku programme included the 'Eurocultured' street culture, and its festival finale on the banks of the Aura featured hundreds of artists from 10 European countries; on the river's islands it created the Turku Contemporary Art Archipelago featuring international and local artists.

In Vilnius, the European art programme was implemented in partnership with cultural organisations and artists from other

European countries. It included the London Symphony Orchestra and a showing of the silent film by Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer, 'The passion of Joan of Arc', with music written for the occasion by the Lithuanian composer Bronius Kutavicius and performed live in the National Opera and Ballet Theatre. Maribor established cultural embassies involving dozens of organisations from more than 30 countries, and renovated the Slovenj Gradec, birthplace of Austrian composer Hugo Wolf, into an international museum and documentation centre about him. A performance based on Wolf's lieder was accompanied by the first international workshop on classical solo singing.

While Europe frequently came to cities, the programmes of many of the cities also

contained projects that extended way beyond their own confines and out into Europe. This was sometimes very tangible: Linz (Austria) offered Danube music tours to the Black Sea and North Sea; Umeå's 'The birds show the way' project followed — through computer technology — birds migrating from the Ume delta through Europe to Asia and Africa, and back again, culminating in an April homecoming party.

Sometimes the reaching out was more conceptual. Guimarães' 'Spera Mundi' represented the universal potential of Portugal in Europe. Linz celebrated its links with eminent Europeans, including the 17th century mathematician and astronomer Johannes Kepler, and the 19th century composer Anton Bruckner. In a more sombre mode, it also offered a retrospective

of the city's association in the past with the Nazi period. And the Umeå (Sweden) film festival's courageous programming opened with 'Violette', evoking post-war Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the links between Violette Leduc, Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Cocteau, Albert Camus and Jean Genet.

New technologies can also lead to new bonds across Europe. With 'Café Europa', a network of digitally connected modular and moveable places, Mons explores with other cities how new ways of learning and technological tools can become vectors of social links.

18