

Preface

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The current double issue of *Amfiteater* focuses on an international empirical research project called *City Study* conducted by a group called STEP from 2010 to 2014. The study compares European theatre systems and covers the fields of theatre audiences, reception, cultural policy and theatre sociology. In 2009, the Project on European Theatre Systems (known by its reverse acronym STEP), published its first book *Global Changes – Local Stages*, in which it investigated how theatre functions in smaller European countries. In designing its next step, that is, its *City Study*, the group standardised the methodology and researched theatre systems through the prism of selected cities in individual countries. The result is this special edition of the third volume of *Amfiteater*, which presents this research in six interrelated articles and also offers descriptions of the cities that were part of the study: Aarhus (Denmark), Bern (Switzerland), Debrecen (Hungary), Groningen (the Netherlands), Maribor (Slovenia), Tartu (Estonia), Tyneside (United Kingdom). These cities are not the theatre capitals of the selected countries and consequently they often remain overlooked in theatre studies. Such a fact does not mean that they do not host a lively theatre life, something which certainly holds true for Slovenia's Maribor. Thus the introductory article presents the methodology and the context of the *STEP City Study*. The following four articles compare not only the theatre systems and the annual supply of theatrical events, divided between production and distribution, but also audience demographics and the experiences of the audiences who visit different theatre types in the studied cities. The concluding article utilises the results from the preceding articles in order to explain how these cities differ and, in particular, to point out the similarities among the Eastern and Western European cities and the cities with touring and residential theatre systems. Although it is possible to read the articles individually, they are best read in the order presented in this issue, since the information from the earlier articles shapes the research frame of the following articles.

The thematic issue of *Amfiteater* attempts to fulfil several research gaps in Slovenian and European theatre studies. First, by publishing the *STEP City Study*, it foregrounds countries that are not often in the spotlight in theatre studies (with the exception of the United Kingdom). Second, the research itself is distinctly sociologically based, an approach that, at least in the Slovenian performing arts,