

UNIMA NORDIC YEAR REPORT 2022-2023

TO UNIMA INTERNATIONAL EUROPE COMMISSION

UNIMA NORDIC is an independent regional cooperation group consisting of Nordic UNIMA member countries. In accordance with the agreement of the UNIMA International Congress in Bali from April 25th to May 1st, 2023, UNIMA NORDIC communicates with the UNIMA International Europe Commission and annually writes a report on the activities of the cooperation group to the Europe Commission.

THE ORIGIN AND MOTIVATION OF THE UNIMA NORDIC COLLABORATION:

"The background for the initiative is the initial fear and anger due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and frustration of the theater world not reacting to the war."

In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. As a reaction to the war, preliminary puppet theater cooperation began between Denmark and Norway as early as March 2022, and all Nordic UNIMA representatives met in May 2022 in a Zoom meeting, establishing a connection with UNIMA Ukraine and UNIMA International. Participating in the collaboration are Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Ukraine. The starting point for cooperation among Nordic puppet theater professionals was to find concrete professional means to collectively assist Ukrainian puppet theater colleagues and demonstrate solidarity amidst the war.

At the same time, there was a clear desire and need to improve Nordic puppet theater cooperation and strengthen cultural exchange among all participating countries.

Key contacts/national leaders of the UNIMA NORDIC cooperation group for 2024:

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Meeting activity and structure:

All 5 Nordic countries of the UNIMA NORDIC group have convened 25 times between May 26, 2022, and December 31, 2023. UNIMA Ukraine has participated in 23 meetings since June 29, 2022.

The project coordinator for UNIMA NORDIC, Tiina Suhonen, coordinates the meetings by sending the participants the agenda, accompanying attachments, and the Zoom meeting link. After recorded meetings, a summary of the meeting is sent out, which also includes the agreed-upon tasks between meetings and the next meeting date. All the meeting documents, agreements, application material, logos, and bank documents are uploaded and accessible to all working group participants on UNIMANORDIC mail account Google Disc at all times throughout the project.

In addition to the meetings, all members have participated in a large number of preparatory smaller working meetings, focusing on themes such as memorandums of understanding, project schedule and content planning, lecture preparation and administration, visual design and visibility, creating forms and templates, lecture video recording and subtitling, grant writing, and technical use of Instagram, among others.

UNIMA NORDIC members have also independently made a significant contribution through activities such as correspondence and collaboration with UNIMA International, fundraising, tax authorities, professional publications, festival organizers, lecturers, workshop leaders, and puppet theater professionals in all project member countries. The visual design of lecture information, text production, and information dissemination are also results of individual members' work within the working group.

Project planning and drafting:

After establishing connections, the group members discussed potential options for professional cultural exchange and investigated the type of assistance Ukrainian puppetry artists might need due to the Russian invasion. We contacted Ukrainian puppetry artists and puppet theaters and asked them directly. Responses received from various Ukrainian puppet theaters, puppetry professionals, university teachers and professors revealed widely diverse needs such as repair of theaters damaged by bombings, personal protective equipment such as bulletproof vests and helmets, ensuring the continuity of puppetry studies for Ukrainian theater students, acquisition of performance rights for Nordic plays, touring opportunities for Ukrainian puppet theater groups in Europe and the Nordics, and job/internship opportunities for Ukrainian puppetry professionals outside Ukraine. There was also a clear need for Ukrainians to learn various modern European puppetry techniques and gain knowledge on how to operate as independent entrepreneurs or freelancers in puppetry. Some of the needs -for example personal protection equipment or funding of damaged theatre buildings- could not be met by UNIMA NORDIC as those needs are taken care of by other kind of organizations and states. Therefore, we decided that the biggest impact of help in our capacity would be to focus on dissemination of relevant information and contacts, and mutual cultural exchange on several ways and levels - together.

The project plan was formulated based on these needs, simultaneously emphasizing the importance of developing Nordic cooperation and cultural exchange with Ukraine.

The project plan particularly focused on supporting puppetry students at Ukrainian universities and fostering significant cultural exchange among the six countries, or even broader. Due to the war situation, the project primarily emphasized recorded online lectures and workshops. This focus enables maximum learning opportunities for puppetry professionals and students in all project member countries, allowing participation and cultural exchange regardless of issues such as

displacement, travel restrictions, financial constraints, or unstable internet connectivity caused by the war. The project also aimed to develop communication methods through which puppetry professionals could create performances to reach refugee children in Ukraine and abroad. Digital communication is also an economical and environmentally friendly form of collaboration. The digital skills of all project participants have significantly improved during the project, and new digital communication and action methods have been utilized to the project's advantage throughout this international project. This helps bridge the gap in differing skill levels across generations and enhances the ability to stay in the profession, find new avenues of expression, and develop puppetry work in all participant countries.

Project applications were prepared under the title "Contemporary puppetry network Nordic-UA." The working group applied for project funding from the Nordic Culture Point and the Nordic Culture Fund. Approval was obtained from the latter for the project in April 2023. After receiving grants, Nordic UNIMA began planning the implementation of workshops scheduled for 2023.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAIN ACTIVITIES:

Administration:

The project liaised with internationally renowned experts, and agreed upon the theme, format, contributors, and schedule for lectures. For this purpose, the project prepared a contract template outlining the general terms and internationally accepted lecture compensation. A contract was made with each lecturer, detailing the lecture-related matters. Administration also involved communication with the tax office and familiarization with domestic and international taxation practices and payment methods.

Responsibilities for organizing workshops and lectures were divided among the UNIMA centers of different countries. Norway, Ukraine, and Finland took responsibility for organizing the first three events. They sought out experts for the lectures, negotiated arrangements with them, and presented the matter at working group meetings. As the grant received was not sufficient to cover the entire original project, the project plan was revised, and approval was obtained from the Nordic Culture Fund. Initial administration tasks included opening a separate bank account, establishing a UNIMA NORDIC email, clarifying the working group, confirming contacts and cooperation partners, and refining the responsibilities and finances of project parties.

The project applicant, UNIMA Norway, is responsible for professional project accounting as part of UNIMA Norway's accounting. The UNIMA NORDIC working group closely examines the project's financial situation at each meeting, adhering to the action plan. The group seeks additional grants for the project.

The first workshop was held at the Figur i Fossekleiva puppetry festival from October 6th to 15th, 2023:

The project covered the participation expenses (travel, course fees, and accommodation) for two Ukrainian puppetry students, Valentin Hura (Kyiv) and Nataliia Dyachenko (Lviv), and the training offered at the festival.

The workshop was advertised as an open call through UNIMA Ukraine in Ukraine, and participants were selected by the UNIMA Norway working group based on applications. Selection criteria included education, age, geographic distribution, gender, English language proficiency, motivation letter, and the potential to share workshop experience with colleagues in Ukraine afterward.

After the workshop, Nataliia Dyachenko and Valentin Hura conducted an open, extensive Zoom lecture with videos and images organized by UNIMA Ukraine. Link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOW9hHb0HpU&list=PLGWM92kCwLEqgIRLBB2qfq_CVc6ZdqCW6&index=2

Visibility and information dissemination:

An Instagram account @unima_nordic and a Facebook account <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550557733847> were opened in 2023. The Instagram account currently has 866 followers, and it primarily shares Nordic puppetry art news but also relevant international news. Information dissemination is also made through personal networks on different platforms.

At this stage of the project, visual reinforcement was provided by the "Puppet Saturdays" logo designed by Hlib Tupin. UNIMA NORDIC maintains close ties with UNIMA International and utilizes UNIMA International's website and Instagram to disseminate information.

Project logo UNIMA Ukraine ja UNIMA Nordic:



Logodesign Rolf Søborg Hansen

The working group project emblem IG and FB:



Sunflower (Ukraines national flower)

Design Tiina Suhonen, Graphic design Rolf Søborg Hansen

The working group logo based on UNIMA International logo:





Logodesign Hlib Tupin, Ukraine

Technical implementation of online lectures:

Registration: Registration for lectures and workshops is available through UNIMA NORDIC Instagram, Facebook, and UNIMA International websites.

The project explored various options for translating or subtitling lectures and opted for Ukrainian-English-Ukrainian simultaneous interpretation, for which there is a functional technical capability in ZOOM lectures.

UNIMA NORDIC disseminated information about its activities through both UNIMA Ukraine and the UNIMA centers of the participating Nordic countries. Information about the training sessions was also announced on the International UNIMA website and Instagram. The training sessions were open to all interested individuals worldwide. As an example, many UNIMA branches in various countries shared information about the UNIMA NORDIC's lectures, (such as UNIMA Italy did on our most recent lecture which will be presented on year report 2024): [Il Dottor Kateryna Lukianenko presenterà il progetto teatrale ucraino “Il Sesto Senso” – UNIMA Italia](#)

Lectures and workshops were recorded. As part of this, project members learned to record different language versions, adjust audio, and upload. The lectures are available for viewing for two weeks on a private YouTube channel. The link to the channel is sent to all who registered for the lectures in advance. (In some cases, researchers have been given the opportunity, upon request, to extend access to the lecture for a longer period).

Two online lectures on the theme of Puppetry Heritage were conducted:

Ukrainian Vertep Puppetry

The responsibility for organizing the first lecture on December 9, 2023, lay with UNIMA Ukraine. Five Ukrainian experts discussed the Vertep tradition in Ukraine. The lecturers included Dr. Daria Ivanova-Hololobova, professor and actress Tetiana Silchenko, director and actress Nataliia Oreshnikova, as well as literature and drama department director and teacher Nina Malyshka, and literature and drama department director Olha Dorofieieva.

Puppetry Heritage

The second lecture on December 16, 2023, was delivered by Dr. Raphaële Fleury, member of the International UNIMA Heritage, Museum, and Documentation Centers Commission, historian, author, and actress. She addressed the transition of puppetry heritage to contemporary puppetry. UNIMA Finland was responsible for organizing this lecture.

Evaluation:

Subsequently, the working group engaged in discussions on the success of the workshops and lectures and identified any necessary improvements.

A total of 236 viewers registered for the first two lectures.

Brief summary of achievements from May 2022 to December 2023:

- Establishment of UNIMA NORDIC through personal contact and networking within Nordic UNIMA centers and active freelancers since May 2022.
- Establishment of contacts with UNIMA Ukraine and invitation of representatives for cooperation and networking.
- Development of networking and project plans based on announced interests and needs with UNIMA Ukraine and all UNIMA NORDIC countries.
- Researching funding possibilities for UNIMA NORDIC, forming project applications in cooperation, and achieving major long-term cultural exchange project funding from the Nordic Culture Fund for UNIMA NORDIC DKK 200 000 in May 2023, allowing the project to commence in 2023.
- Grant from the Swedish Institute to the Puppet Theatre of Kharkiv of 25000 Swedish Kronas.
- Grant of approximately 8700 EUR for Ukrainian video production of puppetry theatre art form from HATS (Hålogaland amatørteaterselskap).
- Granted free dramatizing show rights for Chernihiv Regional Puppet Theatre/Director Vitaly Goltzov of Finnish author Yrjö Kokkos' theatre play "Pessi and Illusia."
- Granted free show rights for Theatre Tetra in Kharkiv/director Oleksandra Odokiienko for the theater play "Comet comes to Moomin Valley" from the Tove Jansson Foundation in Finland. Theatre Tetra are performing shows in bomb shelters and underground stations for children and families in Kharkiv.
- Researching funding possibilities for UNIMA Ukraine for artist residencies, working, studying, and puppetry touring in the Nordic countries and sharing the links to Ukrainian puppet theaters and representatives of UNIMA Ukraine.
- Launch of the UNIMA NORDIC Instagram page and Facebook page for information sharing and networking worldwide.
- Keeping the war in Ukraine visible and showing solidarity on social media – for example, by using #stopthewar, #puppetsforpeace, #standwithukraine.
- Written information articles and contacting theaters, culture councils, immigrant authorities, and educational centers in the Nordic countries.
- Implementation of 1 physical and 2 digital workshops with international, high-level puppetry researchers, professionals, and specialists.
- Performing puppetry shows for Ukrainian children and adults who are refugees in the Nordic countries and connecting with Ukrainian refugee centers.
- Leader of UNIMA Ukraine Daria Ivanova Hololobova connected with the Figur i Fossekleiva festival and conducted a lecture about traditional and modern Vertep puppetry in the Ukraine House in Tønsberg, Norway.
- Shared open invitation links through UNIMA NORDIC Instagram to attend and watch the annual Ukrainian puppet theater competition plays worldwide.
- Developing and updating all project participants' digital working methods and skills and expanding the possibility to reach out internationally and do networking in a contemporary manner.
- Information sharing and internationalization increase the professionalism and work opportunities of all participating parties.
- Employees of UNIMA offices in various countries have also become internationalized.

- Shared information sent by UNIMA International center to members.

Future project development:

At a later stage, there are plans to connect the UNIMA NORDIC network with the NORDIC Puppet Theatre Network to create and strengthen more fluid international touring possibilities for Nordic and Ukrainian puppet theater troops. Further, there are also plans to strengthen UNIMA NORDIC networking with UNIMA International and UNIMA in the Baltic countries.

Oslo

10.06.2024

For UNIMA NORDIC

Tiina Suhonen and Niina Kettunen-Niemi