

KAUNAS  
HISTORY  
THROUGH  
ART



# sound in the silence

Co-funded by  
the European Union



20  
22

# About the Project

**Sound in the Silence** is an educational project arising from the need to find an engaging way of familiarising pupils in the later years of secondary school with difficult aspects of Europe's past. By combining art and history, this international interdisciplinary project offers teenagers a multi-dimensional perspective on the past, resonating with their emotional sensitivity.

In 2022 we organised two editions of the project. In September 2022, four groups of students from different European countries visited Kaunas in Lithuania to learn about the Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum.

A few days after the project ended in Kaunas, another group of students travelled to Linz in Austria to get to know the history of the Mauthausen and Gusen memorial sites better.

Together with artists representing different disciplines and educators from the memorials, participants explored the history of the former places of prosecution.

This exchange, which took into consideration varying experiences and sensitivities, culminated in the production of a final performance: an interdisciplinary work through which the teenagers interpreted newly acquired historical knowledge and expressed their opinions and emotions. The main part of the **Sound in the Silence** project was complemented by a programme for teachers. The course focused on informal and participatory education and consisted of workshops, discussions and meetings with educator from other countries.

Each edition of the project takes place in a different carefully selected location. So far we have visited, among other places, the Denkort Bunker Valentin memorial site, Neuengamme, Ravensbrück and Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial sites, as well as Žilina in Slovakia and Warsaw in Poland.



## Schools taking part in the Kaunas edition:

1. Secondary Vocational School of Economics in Varaždin / Croatia
2. European School Munich / Germany
3. Kaunas Kovo 11 – Osios Gymnasium / Lithuania
4. Budapesti Fazekas Mihály Gyakorló Secondary School and Gymnasium / Hungary

# History of the Memorial Site

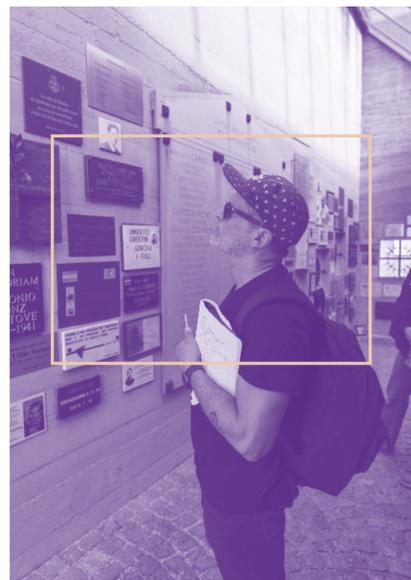
On the first day of the project, participants attended a guided tour in the Ninth Fort Museum, which had served as a prison on several occasions in the past. The building's history dates back to the beginning of the 20th century when most of what is now Lithuania was occupied by the Russian Empire, and the city of Kaunas became a first-class fortress. From 1924 on, the Ninth Fort served as a branch of the Kaunas Hard Labour Prison. During the years of Soviet occupation, 1940–41, the Ninth Fort was used by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) to house political prisoners pending their transfer to the Gulag's forced labour camps. During the years of Nazi occupation, it was put to use as a place of mass murder. About 50,000 Jews, most of them taken from the Kovno Ghetto, were transported to the Ninth Fort and murdered. Today, the museum commemorates the victims and educates visitors about the history of the people who perished on its grounds.



**Freedom in Performance** is a performance workshop that focuses on finding freedom for the actor and their body. The group used improvisational theatre and freestyle rap in order to build connections with one another and gain new perspectives. The performance workshop guided youths to create a performance that developed through the spaces the group had been exploring. During the Kaunas edition, the students focused on words that spoke of both freedom and confinement, as well as writing letters defining what was important for them about life in the present, as well as their wishes, hopes and dreams for the future.



## Rap, Poetry and Performance



### Workshop by Dan Wolf

Dan Wolf is an actor, rapper, playwright, director, producer and educator from the United States. Dan's work crosses artistic and cultural boundaries to combine conventional theatre styles with themes, language, music, history and aesthetics of the hip-hop generation. Dan is a founding member of the critically acclaimed hip-hop music and theatre collective Felonious.

# Dance Workshop



## For All the Bodies

Historical knowledge about the location was the starting point for creativity. The group worked with principles of authentic movement, mindfulness, contact improvisation and improvisation itself to bring about an awareness of the body and the space where the body was placed. It helped participants to connect to their own bodies, to the location that surrounded them and to others in the group. The students developed confidence about their movements and at the end of the workshop, they understood the power of abstract expression in the complexity of the whole performance.



### Workshop by Katarina Rampáčková

Katarina Rampáčková is a choreographer, performer, teacher and dance activist born in Košice, Slovakia. Kat currently lives in Barcelona, where she deepens her dance education in contact improvisation and somatic work – Body Mind Centering – that aims to improve mental health by focusing on body movement. Kat specialises in site-specific performances, inclusive dance and the creation of performances. Together with Michaela Sabolova, they lead PST (Space of Contemporary Dance) in Košice, which, in addition to educational activities, produces performances, organises an annual festival called MOVE Fest, where Kat is in charge of the festival's dramaturgy.



The vocal workshop, for singers and non-singers alike, allowed students to take part in creating an anti-singing choir. They worked with various exercises and singing techniques including classical, vocal improvisation, body percussion, beatbox, screams, growls and whispers. The students also drew individual graphic scores, which allowed them to create highly unique and emotional vocal work based on their individual and/or shared experiences of the historical site.



**Workshop by Sean Palmer**

Sean Palmer is a singer, an active creator, collaborator and educator, who trained in theatre and visual arts at the Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. He has been a part of the Warsaw theatre and performance scene since 2000, traversing multiple forms of music and theatre from experimental fringe to pop radio broadcasts. Currently (2022–23) he is co-running MONT – a youth orchestra in Warsaw, leading a course called multivoice at the University of Warsaw and collaborating with the Museum of Contemporary Art, leading short choral projects. Since 2015 he has been the front man of a band, the White Kites, and jazz trio, William's Things.



## Group Dynamics



During the programme in Kaunas, participants were under the supervision of the moderator Tetiana Kriukovska, who organised different activities every day for a better group dynamic. Thanks to so-called 'opening and closing circles', participants learnt more about each other in a fun way; they discussed the upcoming activities and possible challenges. Those slots helped them to develop better relationships within the group and establish stronger, more cooperative bonds with the team.



### Workshops by Tetiana Kriukovska

Tetiana Kriukovska is a filmmaker from Ukraine, the head of NGO Tolerance in You and a youth worker. Tetiana is currently based in Germany, where she coordinates the LIKHTAR project in Bredbeck, supported by The German-Polish Youth Office. During the **Sound in the Silence** project, Tetiana was responsible for ensuring the participants' wellbeing and promoting positive group dynamics.

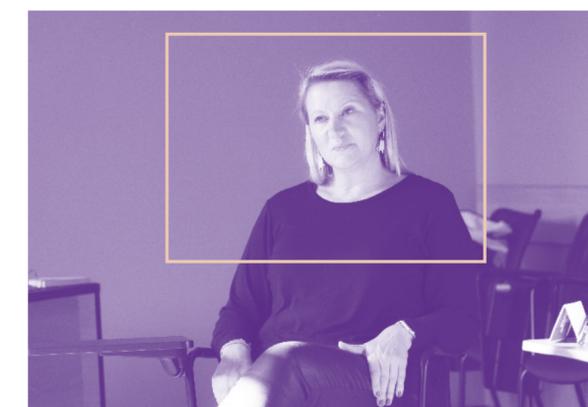
# Visual Approaches

## to Teaching and Learning

## about the Holocaust



The workshop was open both to teachers that came with students as well as to local teachers interested in this topic. The opening session was based on creative and interactive elements; the group discussed examples of non-curricular and aesthetic research and analysed the concept of commemoration. The workshop showed examples of bridge building between school and university practice. The second session focused on graphic novels depicting the Holocaust – the participants were invited to try using graphics and discussed how to implement this approach when teaching and learning about the Holocaust.



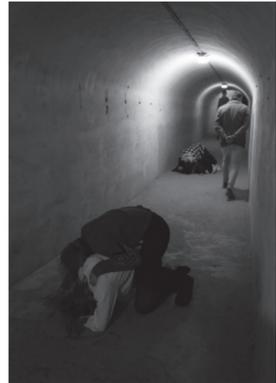
**Workshop for Teachers by Maja Sturm**

Maja Sturm is a senior teacher at Ernst-Moritz-Arndt Gymnasium, Senior Secondary School, Osnabrück, coordinator of school development / educational quality development involved in various committees and fields, e.g. gender equality. She graduated from Paderborn University. Maja holds certificates for the Fulbright seminar 'Diversity in US Education' and the International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, seminar 'Holocaust and Education'.

## Final Performance

The project finished with a promenade performance through the Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. The audience actively engaged with the location by meeting up in the tunnels, halls, rooms and corridors, exploring viewpoints and the history they had spent time learning about, bringing it all to life through abstract (dance and voice) and non-abstract (written word) art forms. The audience was given the chance to experience what the participants had learned, rather than just watching a presentation of their findings. The group started to FEEL what the combination of artistic disciplines offers a viewer, and they themselves had an artistic experience of the location. The performance was wrapped up during a discussion with students, educators, artists and guests about the artistic act and alternative methods of historical education.





# Lyrics from the song 'Confinement'

Trapped without moving, in this scary-looking place.  
 Did I deserve this? What do I have to face?  
 It's useless.  
 I'm left without freedom to create.  
 Confinement  
 Confinement  
 No escape  
 Not being fake  
 Stripped of all your human rights  
 What's the reason  
 Fear  
 Lately i've been living in my dreams  
 Floating flying running through the  
 Screams  
 Struggling stumbling  
 Bleeding from my knees  
 Shrieking howling  
 Gripping at the seams  
 Tension is crawling all over my skin  
 I want to escape  
 I don't want them to win  
 I wanna be free  
 I see a better future  
 Back with my family  
 Why is that a sin?  
 For all these years we were dehumanised  
 And our bodies were tortured and utilised  
 Bittersweet memories we never forget  
 We watched the ghetto burn when the fire  
 Was lit  
 It was difficult for the prisoners to cope  
 But it's easier for us to find hope  
 You promise us freedom in the form of a  
 Dove  
 You keep killing people you promised us  
 Love  
 Confinement  
 Confinement

Trapped without moving, in this scary-looking place.  
 Did I deserve this? What do I have to face?  
 It's useless.  
 I'm left without freedom to create.  
 Confinement  
 Confinement  
 No escape  
 Not being fake  
 Stripped of all your human rights  
 What's the reason  
 I listen for the laughter of children  
 Sound of waves breaking  
 I hear gunshots  
 My breath you're not taking  
 I smell sea salt, fresh air, fresh grass  
 That my home country naturally has  
 Everything that ever happened in history  
 Is propaganda still remains a mystery  
 Years and years of torture  
 Turns us into food for vultures  
 Murdered people  
 Shattered cultures  
 Blacked out  
 Never gave us closure  
 Fathers and mothers experienced grief  
 Their children's lives were so brief  
 We feel a deep sense of regret  
 A feeling collectively never forget  
 Confinement  
 Confinement  
 Trapped without moving, in this scary-looking place.  
 Did I deserve this?  
 What do I have to face?  
 It's useless.  
 I'm left without freedom to create  
 Confinement  
 Confinement  
 No escape  
 Not being fake

performed during  
the final performance

STUDENTS

TEACHERS

HR



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Zsófia Hegyes



Kevin Caballero-Szabó



Bálint Dobai



Alexandra Mészáros



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Christine Riesenhuber



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Closing Information

The **Sound in the Silence** project in years 2022–23 is organised as a consortium of seven institutions. The educational programme takes place in four countries: Lithuania / Kaunas and Austria / Mauthausen in 2022 and Germany / Wannsee, Berlin and Croatia / Jasenovac in 2023. While selecting the locations, we also intended to raise awareness of those historical events connected to

the Holocaust that are less known, and at the same time showcase the fates of various persecuted groups (involving representatives of different nationalities, genders, ages, religious views, ethnic and social background, etc.). Addressing them on a local and community level aims to create a link between global and local histories.

Institutions involved in the creation of the 2022–23 editions of the **Sound in the Silence** project:

1. European Network Remembrance and Solidarity / Poland (Head of the Consortium)
2. Motte Cultural Centre / Hamburg, Germany
3. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum / Lithuania
4. Jasenovac Memorial Site / Croatia
5. Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past / Croatia
6. Memorial and Educational Site House of the Wannsee Conference / Germany
7. Mauthausen Memorial / Austria

EU STATEMENT

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European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS) was founded by the ministers of culture of Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. In 2014, Romania joined the network. Austria, Albania, the Czech Republic and Georgia are the observer countries. The purpose of the ENRS is to document and promote the study of 20th-century history and how it is remembered. Our areas of interest centre on dictatorial regimes, wars and resistance to oppression. We implement our own projects and support, in terms of content and financing, actions of institutions, non-governmental organisations and research centres that focus on memory studies. The network's activities contribute to building better relations between European societies through discussion of our common past. Since 2012, we have co-organised **Sound in the Silence**, further developing its educational component and broadening the project's scope.

The project in Kaunas took place from 28 September to 5 October 2022. First, the participants and their teachers explored the complex history of the Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum and the ghetto. They had a unique chance to meet the Holocaust survivor Fruma Vitkinaitė-Kučinskienė, who shared the history of her rescue from the ghetto in Kaunas. After getting to know the location better, each student participated in a writing workshop called the ‘Art of Remembrance’ that uses creative writing exercises to create a personal connection to history. These exercises formed the foundation of the students’ work in artistic workshops where they experimented with either dance, voice or performance to create original material. This material was then woven together into a site-specific performance and presented to the public.

