

PITESTI
2024



sound in the — silence

history through art



history through- art



'Sound in the Silence' is an interdisciplinary remembrance project aimed at encouraging secondary school students from around Europe to actively reflect on difficult aspects of the 20th-century history through artistic means.

Drawing on their reflections and emotional reactions to what they learn about the memorial site, young students work together with professional artists to create a performance based on dance, vocals and creative writing.

While the pupils learn about the site's past and work on the final performance, their teachers take part in interdisciplinary workshops to explore ways to teach history, and in so doing exchange experiences with peers from different countries.

An open call for teachers to participate in the 'Sound in the Silence' project in Romania was issued between March and May 2024.

A total of 32 schools from across Europe submitted applications. The jury had chosen following schools to take part in the 2024 edition of the programme:

- **1st International School,** Ostrava (Czech Republic),
- **European School,** Munich (Germany),
- **Complex of Technical and Secondary Schools No. 2,** Katowice (Poland),
- **Arts College,** Baia Mare (Romania).

The 'Sound in the Silence' project provided an incredibly impactful and thought-provoking experience, focusing for the first time on the post-war period and the communist regime in Romania. By combining historical education with creative expression – through art, poetry, dance, and performance – it offered young people a powerful way to engage with challenging historical events. Remarkably, the performance also influenced how locals remember the history of the Pitești Memorial, underscoring the initiative's profound emotional and educational impact.

The institutions involved in the creation of the 2024 edition of the 'Sound in the Silence' project were:

- **The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity,** Poland (Organiser),
- **The Pitești Prison Memorial,** Romania (Partner),
- **The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism,** Romania (Partner).

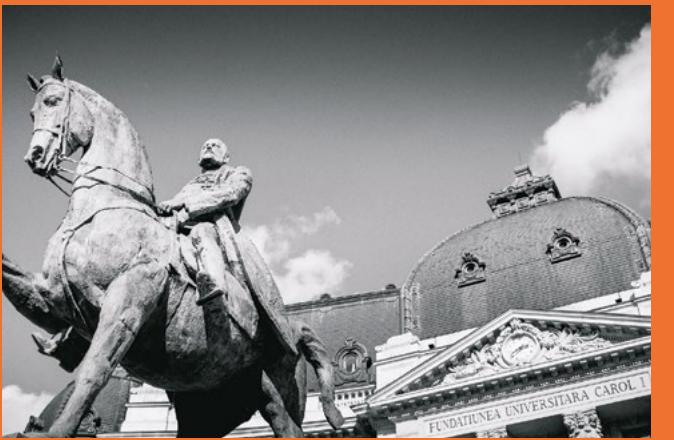
individuals during — Romanian communism



The 'Sound in the Silence' project is an interdisciplinary educational initiative for young Europeans that initially focused on the Holocaust. However, as the end of the Second World War did not mark the end of suffering, this year's initiative also covered the history and events that took place in Piteşti Prison in Romania.

Piteşti, a town near Bucharest, is the site of one of the most harrowing and brutal chapters in the history of post-war Romania. From 1949 to 1951, the communist regime used Piteşti Prison as a place of extreme psychological and physical torture. This dark period, known as the 'Piteşti Experiment', was aimed at crushing the personality of the political detainees to prevent them from resisting the regime.

The primary targets of this experiment were anti-communist university students considered a threat by the communist government. The methods of torture employed were atrocious and designed not only to break the individuals down physically but also to dismantle their sense of self and humanity.



From August 1948 onwards, almost all the political prisoners who were students at the time of their arrest were sent to Piteşti Prison. The prison has become infamous for being the centre of the brutal 'Piteşti Phenomenon' as named by the Romanian poet Virgil Ierunca. Students experienced remorseless torture to denounce their own anti-communist activity, as well as all their acquaintances. They were also forced to distance themselves from their family, friends and all their moral values. To demonstrate that they had genuinely become 'new men', they were asked to become aggressors for other victims.

The release of political prisoners in 1963–64 did not bring the end of repression but rather a change. The Securitate – the Romanian secret police – moved on to the extensive surveillance of citizens, and those who still opposed the regime were convicted under common law charges or committed to psychiatric hospitals. After 1970, Nicolae Ceauşescu abandoned the liberalisation measures and wanted to control society ideologically and through law enforcement. Ceauşescu and his family became the subject of a personality cult unique in Eastern Europe. Attempts to form unions or organise dissident movements were repressed by the Securitate on the orders of Ceauşescu.

The leader of communist Romania wanted to radically transform society, to replace the old villages and build monumental buildings, to show that the country had achieved success under his leadership. The most important project was to construct a House of the People (now the Palace of Parliament), in the centre of Bucharest, demolishing many beautiful old neighbourhoods. Massive blocks of flats were erected next to the palace and along the main boulevards. Today we can still see this architectural spectacle of communism. As part of the 2024 edition, students explored the history of the Ceauşescu era through architectural reminiscences of that time.

The traumatic stories and the emotions associated with them were discussed by the project's young participants under the guidance of artists using the history-through-art method.

In the course of the educational and artistic workshops, the youth, working with testimonies and accounts from survivors, were given opportunity to hear their individual stories. This was an important part of the project. They also explored that sometimes part of remembering, especially painful events in the history of nations or communities, involves forgetting them. In addition, they explored the idea that understanding and nurturing the memory of history is one of the most important elements in the formation of one's identity.

This initiative placed young people in a position to confront this extremely challenging and oppressive history. They learned the tragic stories of people not much older than themselves, who were stripped of all humanity by a harsh regime.



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Bucharest and Piteşti



On 5 October four groups, composed of one teacher and seven students each, met in Bucharest, where they learned about Romania's 20th-century history, including the First and the Second World Wars, the communist period from the establishment of communism and the characteristics of the Ceauşescu era to the revolutionary outbreak in 1989.

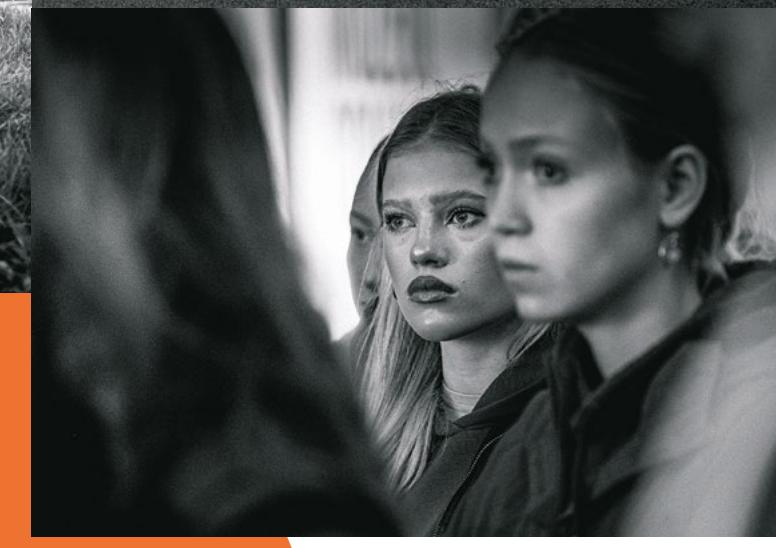
On Sunday and Monday participants took part in:

- **Lectures about the history of Romania**
led by academics from the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism:
 - Dr Cristina Diac, *Harassing the Red Dictatorship: The Anti-communist Resistance in Romania (1945-64)*
 - Dr Ana-Maria Cătănuş, *'They Said 'No to silence': Opposition and Dissent in Communist Romania (1965-89)*
 - Dr Corina Doboş, *Criminalisation of Elective Abortion in Communist Romania: Victims, Heroes and Villains*
- **Meeting with the history witnesses:**
Dinu Zamfirescu and Ileana Budimir
- **Guided tour of the Palace of the Parliament**
- **Guided tour through Bucharest**
emphasising its historical background with Lucian Vasile

After spending three days in Bucharest, all the participants moved to the former prison in Piteşti, which was a scene of one of the cruellest experiments in the modern world. Maria Axinte, Director of the Piteşti Memorial Museum, gave a tour of the site and introduced the participants to a very difficult part of Romanian history.

educational workshops and guided tours

5-7 OCTOBER 2024



cre _ ative writing

WORKSHOP BY
DAN WOLF



After a study of the site's history, the students took part in a creative writing workshop. This workshop uses creative writing exercises to create a personal connection to history. Subsequently, this creative writing was used as the foundation for their work in artistic workshops where students worked with either dance, voice or performance to create original material. This material was then woven together to create a site-specific performance that was presented to the public.

The workshop introduced participants to the artists, explored the 'Sound in the Silence' project's origins and methods, and showcased past performance images to inspire creative involvement. Participants transitioned from research to artistic expression, preparing for their performance.

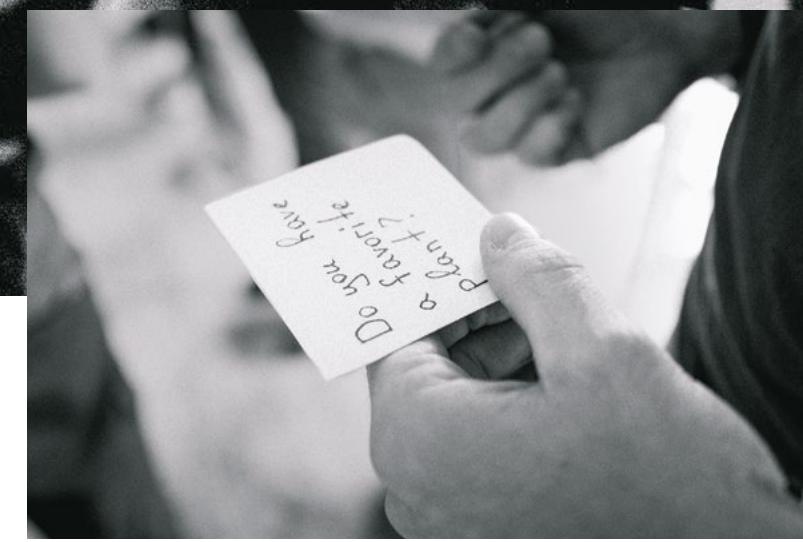
This edition emphasised poetry, encouraging reflection on its form and presence in the world. Activities included compiling evocative words and images inspired by Pitești Prison, crafting haiku poems to distill impressions and a freewriting exercise on the question, 'What is freedom to you?' The group also created 'Telephone Poems', structured by word limits, and designed leaflets advocating personal causes, inspired by a Romanian Academy House presentation. These exercises fostered deep connections to history and creativity.



DAN WOLF

PROJECT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,
CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

Dan is a hip-hop artist who works with rap, theatre, personal narrative and history to give voice to the problematic world we live in. His multisensory work draws its power from years of experience working, teaching and performing with the critically acclaimed hip-hop music and theatre collective Felonious. His projects have travelled all around the world from concert halls to museums to schools and memorial sites where he engages history and culture as a prompt to make vital music and theatre that can only live in this moment. He is the Artistic Director of 'Sound in the Silence' and a co-founder of both the Bay Area Theatre Cypher and Felonious. He is a board member of the Playwrights Foundation and a member of the Recording Academy and Actors Equity Association.



rap — and poetry

WORKSHOP BY DAN WOLF

Dan guided the participants in crafting individual poems inspired by the powerful and haunting history of Pitești Prison, as well as the deep impressions it left on the students. These personal reflections culminated in a moving final performance, seamlessly transitioning from the opening poem to the closing song. Throughout the writing process, the group engaged with this challenging space, transforming its silence with their own voices.

In addition to exploring poetic expression, the workshop introduced participants to key rap techniques, focusing on rhyme schemes, rhythm and flow. Dan emphasised the use of internal rhyme, multisyllabic rhyme and wordplay, helping students enhance the musicality of their writing. The group also practised cadence and delivery, experimenting with different tempos and beats to find their unique voices. By incorporating these elements, the participants learned how rap can be a powerful storytelling tool, blending personal reflection with rhythmic expression.



KAT RAMPACKOVA

DANCE WORKSHOPS

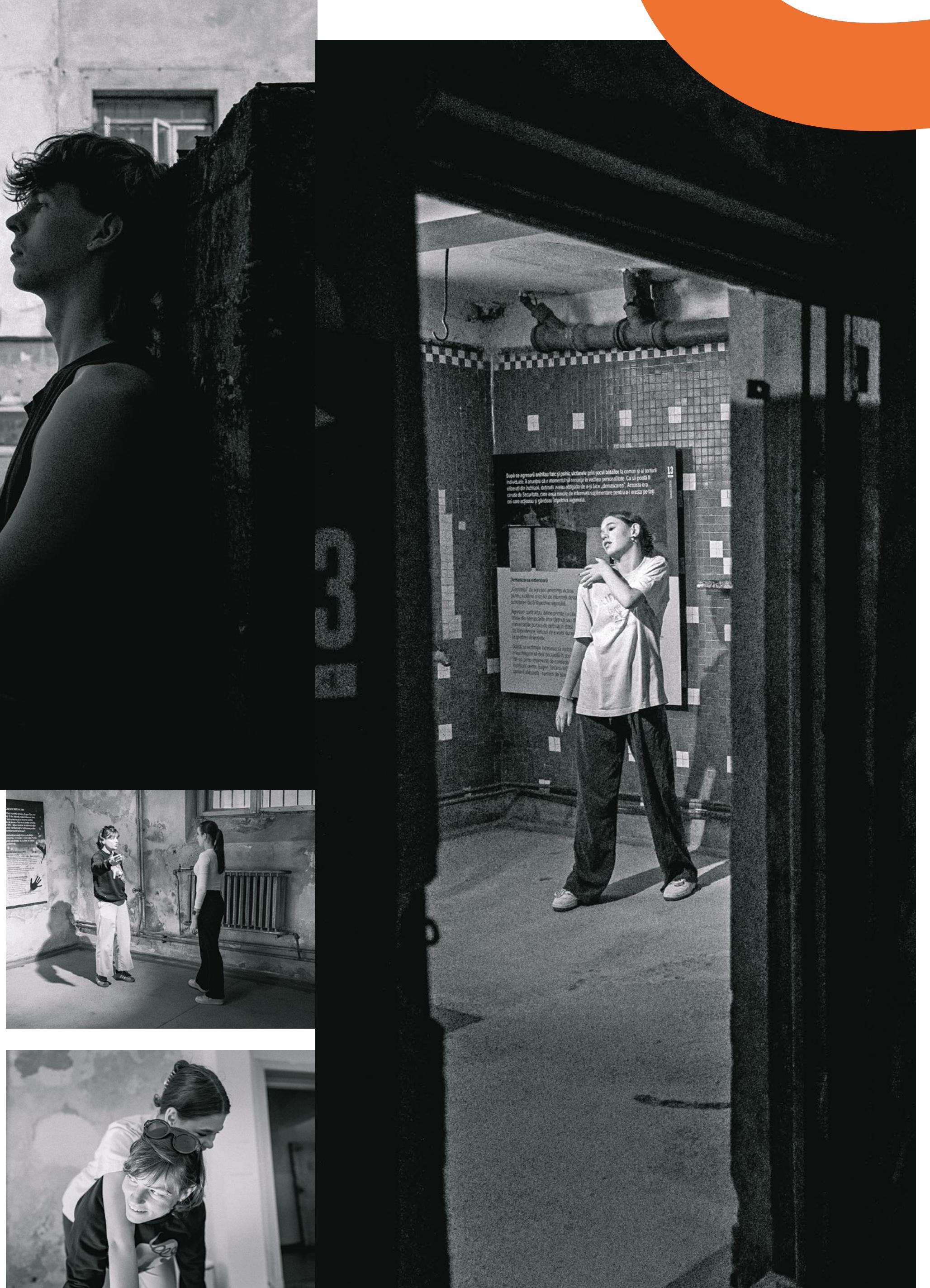
Kat is a choreographer, dance activist and dance facilitator from Košice, Slovakia, specialising in interdisciplinary and inclusive dance projects. She is the co-founder of PST – Space of Contemporary Dance in Košice, and the dramaturg for MOVE Fest Košice, an annual festival of contemporary dance and new circus. Currently based in Barcelona, Kat is expanding her expertise in body-mind centering. Since 2009, she has been a freelance choreographer and performer, with a focus on inclusion and artistic projects for children, as well as dance and site-specific performances in both traditional and non-traditional settings. Since 2016, Kat has been a choreographer for 'Sound in the Silence'. Her work emphasises cross-cultural communication, community-building and the integration of art and education.

da_n _ce

WORKSHOP BY
KAT RAMPACKOVA

The students were highly motivated, open and receptive, making it possible to connect the prison's history to their physical expressions in a short time. Their authenticity and willingness to explore allowed us to create sensitive and meaningful movement scenes.

We drew inspiration from haiku poems written in a creative writing workshop, the prison's spaces and the concept of 'care', absent during the Pitești Experiment. Working in tight spaces led to smaller scenes that ultimately unified the performance. The result was a cohesive, installation-like experience where the audience moved through various rooms, immersing themselves in the atmosphere of each scene.



artistic workshops

8-12 OCTOBER 2024



SEAN PALMER

VOCAL WORKSHOPS

Sean is an active creator, collaborator and educator, who trained in theatre and arts in Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. After almost a decade of theatrical collaborations between Poland and the UK, he moved to Poland permanently. Between 2010 and 2020 he ran his own experimental choir – GRE BADANIE – exploring the boundaries of sound and energy as a carrier of meaning. From 2014 to 2018 he was the resident artistic director/conductor of the POLIN choir. He currently co-runs MONT – a youth orchestra and a fun community choir for foreigners with the support of artistic institutions in Warsaw. Since 2015 he has been the front man of the White Kites and the jazz trio William's Things.



vo— cal

WORKSHOP BY SEAN PALMER

The workshop explored emotional expression inspired by the Pitesti guide's description of the prisoner's stress positions. Their bodies were stripped of freedom, while their minds could not be imprisoned. During the workshop participants reflected on mental resilience despite physical constraints. Sessions included physical and vocal warm-ups, group dynamics and closed-eye vocal improvisations to enhance sensitivity.

Participants created two-minute solos, refining them through group feedback to foster vulnerability and peer support. Using Phil Minton's 'Feral Choir' method, they performed solos, duets and harmonies, uniting vocalists and non-vocalists in a cohesive choral experience.

The workshop blended emotional depth, physical expression and vocal creativity, culminating in a powerful performance.

group dynamic workshops

5-13 OCTOBER 2024



TETIANA KRIUKOVSKA

FACILITATOR OF GROUP DYNAMICS

Tetiana comes from Donetsk, Ukraine, where she worked as a filmmaker. After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, she founded the NGO 'Tolerance in You', which organises exchange programmes for young people from Germany, Poland and Ukraine and which trains educators specialising in war. Tetiana moved to Germany in March 2022, where she worked as a project coordinator for the Ukrainian-Polish-German education network LIKHTAR at the Bredbeck educational institute. During the 'Sound in the Silence' project, Tetiana is responsible for ensuring the participants' wellbeing, offering them tools to reflect on what they have learned and sensitively and creatively focuses on personal feelings. Her dream is to organise 'Sound in the Silence' in Ukraine one day, fostering a new culture of remembrance of the war in her country.



group dyna mic

WORKSHOPS BY TETIANA KRIUKOVSKA

During the programme participants were under the supervision of the moderator Tetiana Kriukovska, who organised different activities daily for a better group dynamic.

The journey from the hotel to the memorial site took about 20 minutes each day. This time was used to strengthen a group dynamic: the facilitator created different tandem partners for each person to communicate with during each bus ride. This helped to create space for getting to know each other better and did not interfere with the programme.

The facilitator helped students who wanted to share their feelings but were not confident enough to do so in front of the whole group. Thanks to so-called 'opening and closing circles', participants learned 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 for teachers

4-12 DECEMBER 2024



JOANNA ORŁOS

Joanna holds a master's degree in English Philology from the University of Warsaw. She completed postgraduate courses at Warsaw School of Economics and the Maria Grzegorzewska University of Warsaw in psychology and managerial competencies. She translates English and Czech into Polish and is a member of the Polish Literary Translators' Association. She has worked for the ENRS for 10 years, first as the project coordinator and then as the head of a team. In her current work she supervises education and exhibition projects.

Educational resources by Joanna Orłos

During the workshop teachers learned about the free educational resources available on the 'Hi-Story Lessons' educational platform, including infographics, lesson plans and animations. Participants considered how to use the resources in their teaching. Teachers also learned about other practical examples of how to use visual language in educational projects as a useful method for tackling challenging historical subjects and processing them in a way that suits the students' individual sensibilities. The main historical topic was the Second World War. Among others, Joanna Orłos presented the educational kit about disinformation and memory conflicts. She focused on tools that could be used to determine the authenticity of news and how to crack down on fake news.



BARBARA WALSH

Barbara is from Ireland and is a trained restorative facilitator and practitioner. She has had a varied career working in the fields of research, advocacy, training, community development, peace building and restorative work at a local, national and international level.

Her current work in restorative justice stems from a growing need to address harm and restore fractured relationships between individuals, institutions and other organisations. Her experience has shown her that conflict, despite being seen as fearsome and negative by some, can often be a source of innovation and positive change. To date she has worked with community groups, institutions, prisoners, former combatants, individuals, victims of sexual abuse and trauma, members of Christian churches and many more. She holds a master's in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (Trinity College Dublin, Belfast based) and a master in Community Development (NUI, Galway).

Restorative dialogue and conflict resolution by Barbara Walshe

This interactive workshop was a reflective and experiential space for educators to reflect on how we all manage conflict in our lives and in our work environment.

A presentation on conflict styles and a range of methodologies that could be helpful in addressing all kinds of issues had been presented for discussion. These included the basic principles of mediation, restorative justice and restorative dialogue. A restorative circle methodology was used to address a range of issues with either students, family or colleagues.



IOANA HASU-GEORGIEV

Ioana is a Romanian researcher of the recent past, focusing on less explored aspects of the communist dictatorship, such as the role of women in the anti-communist movement, transgenerational trauma and the postmemory of traumatic past events. She created an interactive workshop on communism for children and young students called the *Country of Our Grandparents* that has been presented in schools and summer camps over the past 10 years. In 2022 Ioana helped set up the first Museum of Communism for Children in Romania, at the Pitești Prison Memorial. Her latest research resulted in a documentary play portraying women who fought against communism in Romania. Besides the play *Share Location: Rezistenta Fagaras*, the project included workshops for students and teachers and a series of public debates discussing the legacy of communism in contemporary society.

Ioana has many years' experience as a radio journalist in Romania for both home and foreign affairs.

Methodology of exploring the past: Transgenerational trauma, post-traumatic amnesia (PTA), postmemory by Ioana Hasu-Georgiev

The last part of the workshops was divided into two parts:

Trauma and the recent past

The 20th-century is marked by traumatic events such as the World Wars, the Holocaust, communism and various genocides. This workshop explored postmemory and transgenerational trauma – psychological and physiological suffering passed on to future generations. Instead of recounting events and casualties, the focus was on understanding and integrating these inherited traumas.

Drawing on interdisciplinary research in history, psychology and memory studies, the workshop examined post-traumatic amnesia and postmemory, using case studies from



European archives and personal survivor accounts. Trainer Ioana Hasu-Georgiev shared her family's experience with transgenerational trauma, as the granddaughter of an executed anti-communist fighter.

Friendly methodology of exploring the recent past

The workshop introduced interactive methods for teaching about communism, tailored for secondary school teachers. Tested at the Făgăeaș Research Institute, this approach encourages a fresh look at old documents through undertaking ethnographic research in Romania's secret police archives. Educators were challenged to view each document as an artefact with a hidden story. Special focus was given to recovering the overlooked perspectives of marginalised women alongside persecuted men. The workshop also guided participants in becoming oral history researchers, using family photographs to create independent school archives and explore underrepresented voices.

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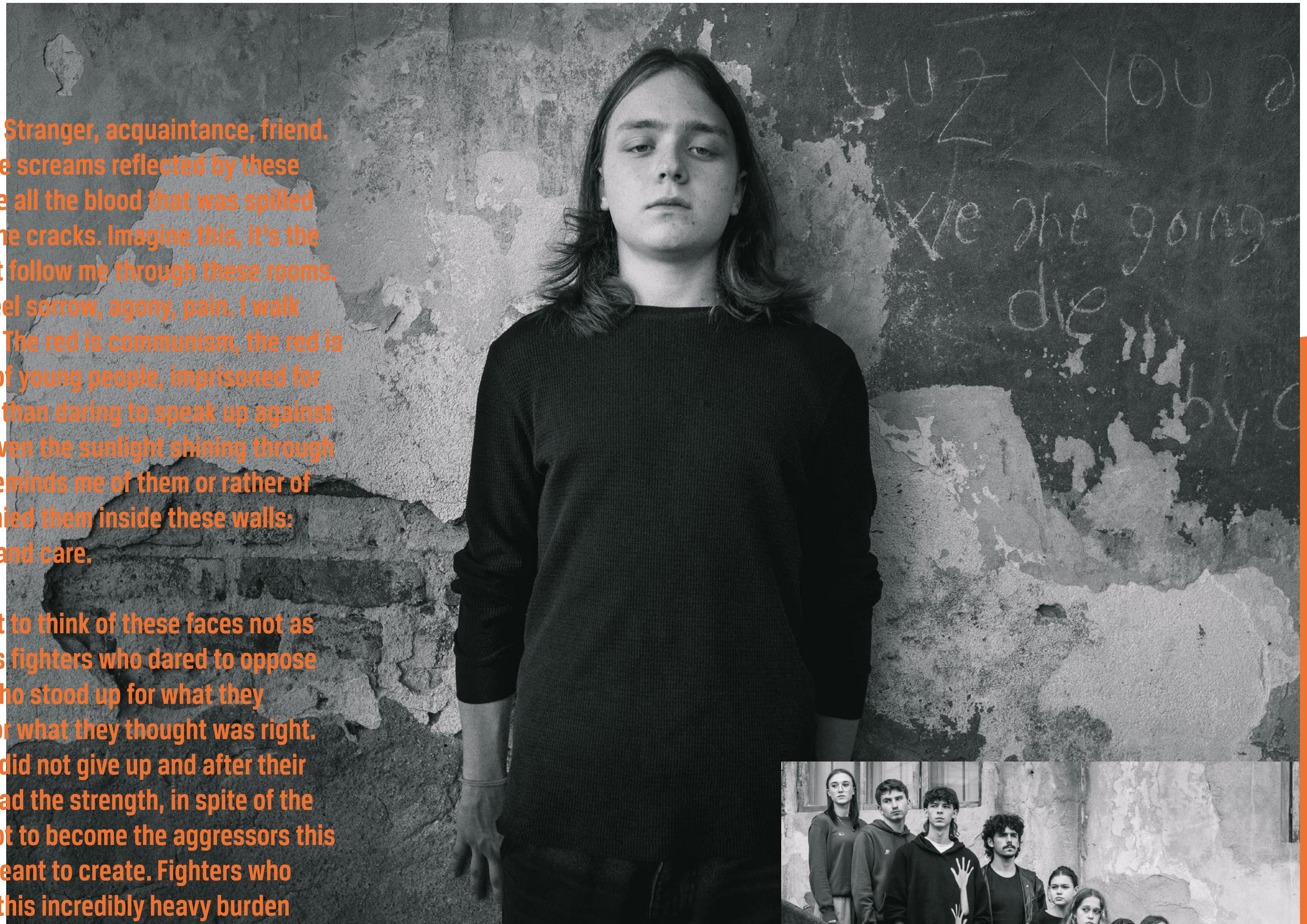
final perform ance

The final performance began shortly after 6pm, after the project organiser, the Director of the ENRS, Rafał Rogulski; the Director of the Pitești Memorial Museum, Maria Axinte; and the Artistic Director of the 'Sound in the Silence' project, Dan Wolf, welcomed the large audience. The performance began at the prison gate with a monologue written by one of the participants.



You! Yes, you. Stranger, acquaintance, friend. Listen, feel the screams reflected by these walls. Imagine all the blood that was spilled seeping out the cracks. Imagine this, it's the emotions that follow me through these rooms. I walk and I feel sorrow, agony, pain. I walk and I see red. The red is communism, the red is blood. Blood of young people, imprisoned for nothing more than daring to speak up against the system. Even the sunlight shining through the window reminds me of them or rather of what was denied them inside these walls: warmth, love and care.

And yet I want to think of these faces not as victims but as fighters who dared to oppose the regime, who stood up for what they believed in, for what they thought was right. Fighters who did not give up and after their release still had the strength, in spite of the Securitate, not to become the aggressors this experiment meant to create. Fighters who lived on with this incredibly heavy burden and still managed to pursue their careers. Fighters strong enough to talk about the painful memories they have of this place. So let us not pity them, but admire them for their strength, let us be inspired by their courage. Let us carry them in our memory as fighters.





The office block in the former Piteşti Prison served as a transitional passage, offering brief previews of upcoming scenes.

The prison location posed significant challenges, with narrow corridors, unconnected spaces and two stairwells. The audience was split into two groups, creating dual routes and navigating timing complexities.

To manage the split, audience members were given coloured tickets at the entrance. Following a courtyard dance performance, organisers guided the groups using large coloured markers.

One group started on the first floor while the other explored the basement. Artists communicated throughout to ensure the groups switched locations after approximately eight or nine minutes. Once both groups had experienced both areas, they were signalled to move to the entrance corridor for the finale.

The final performance featured rap songs accompanied by live body percussion. Compact but emotionally powerful, it required the audience to stay active, moving between rooms and observing from different vantage points. Through rap and poems, sounds of the voices and dance

and movement, and also thanks to their collaboration, participants gave a voice to those who can no longer speak for themselves, preserving memory and meaning through their art. The young performers gave their all, delivering stunningly beautiful, touching and at times shocking insights. The immersive set-up fostered deep engagement, leaving a lasting impression on both the audience and the participants. The lyrics of the final song left the message for future generations.



We came here with
smiles on our faces,
Different languages,
cultures and places.

For a journey we
packed our suitcases.

Left our bases to
look for the traces
of history,
to uncover this mystery,
what's with this misery.

Torture is visibly
Here!
Let this be clear!

We're facing our fears,
Holding back tears.
Why?

They were still kids
not older than us.
Their spirits

were crushed.
Their hope turned
to dust.

What can we do?
Remember!
Don't let the
memory rust.

the impact

I pass this place every day
on my way to school.
I know its history, but your
performance made me look at
it with totally different eyes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I would really like to thank the audience for coming. I never felt like this during the week we spent preparing. It was amazing, of course, but today, with all of you here, it's so fulfilling to share what we did. I have to say, it really took some courage for us to express ourselves in front of so many people. Even if you didn't realise it, you really supported us and made the energy wonderful.

BARTOSZ STUDENT FROM POLAND

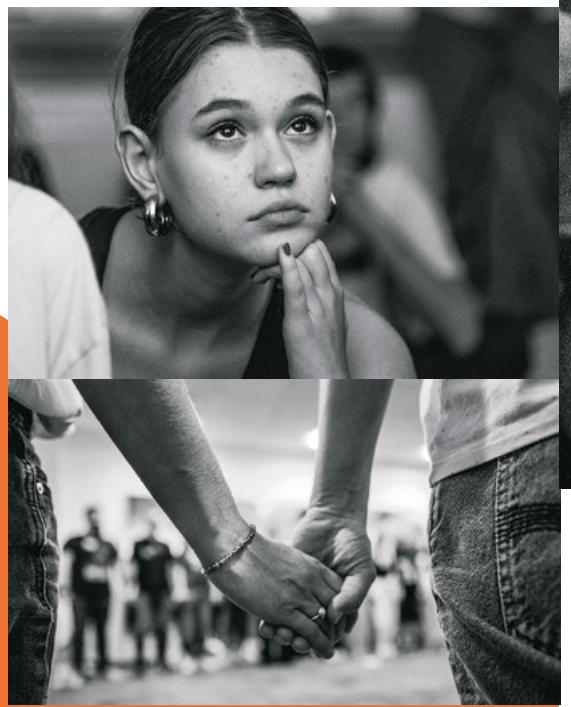


It's a great opportunity for everyone just to feel connected, and also to learn about a terrible piece of history and then be able to use it and make something out of it that can change the world or at least change our world.

EVA STUDENT FROM GERMANY

When I came here, I didn't know very much about this place. As I watched you perform, I was about to cry. The story of this place isn't a happy one, but you managed to send a message that wasn't so sad. Your rap at the end made me realise that this is a past we should remember.

AUDIENCE MEMBER



Here, we build connections between different countries. For me, the most important thing is that from now on, you are connected – I hope for life. No matter what happens in your countries or personal lives, you'll always have a link to these people, and I think that's what 'Sound in the Silence' is really about.

TETIANA KRIUKOVSKA

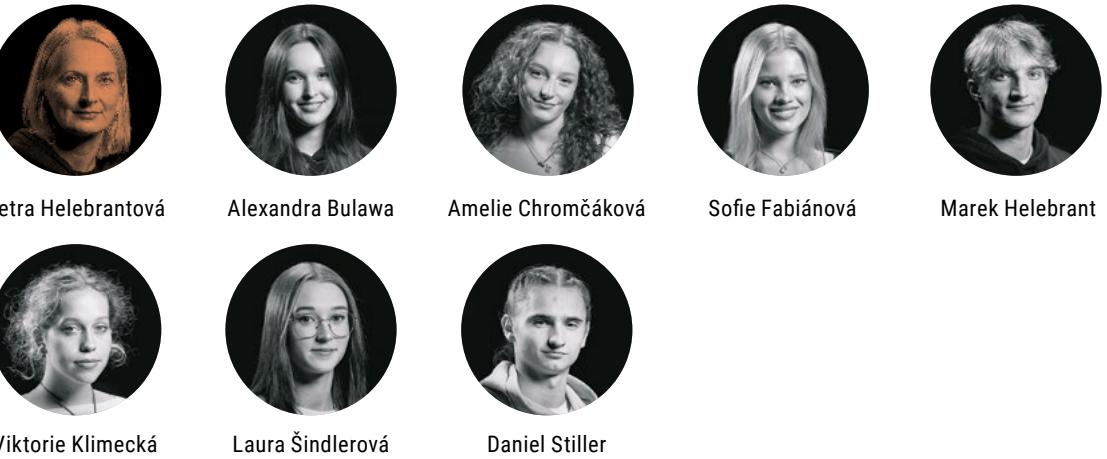


Thanks to this project, we can develop our character, emotions and how we can look at history in the future. I think that it is a great journey.

JACEK STUDENT FROM POLAND

PARTICIPANTS: STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

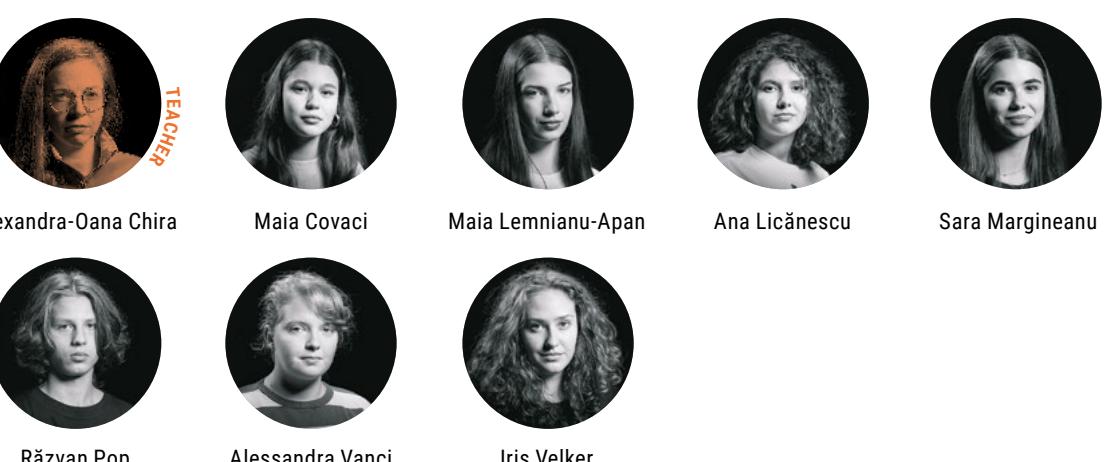
1st International School of Ostrava, Ostrava/Czech Republic



Petra Helebrantová Alexandra Bulawa Amelie Chromčáková Sofie Fabiánová Marek Helebrant



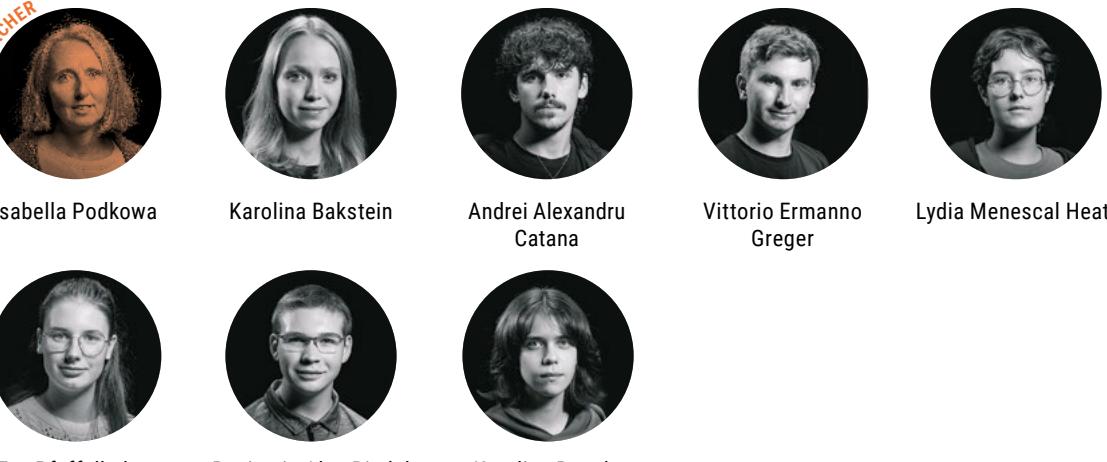
Baia Mare Arts College, Baia Mare/Romania



Alexandra-Oana Chira Maia Covaci Maia Lemnianu-Apan Ana Licănescu Sara Margineanu



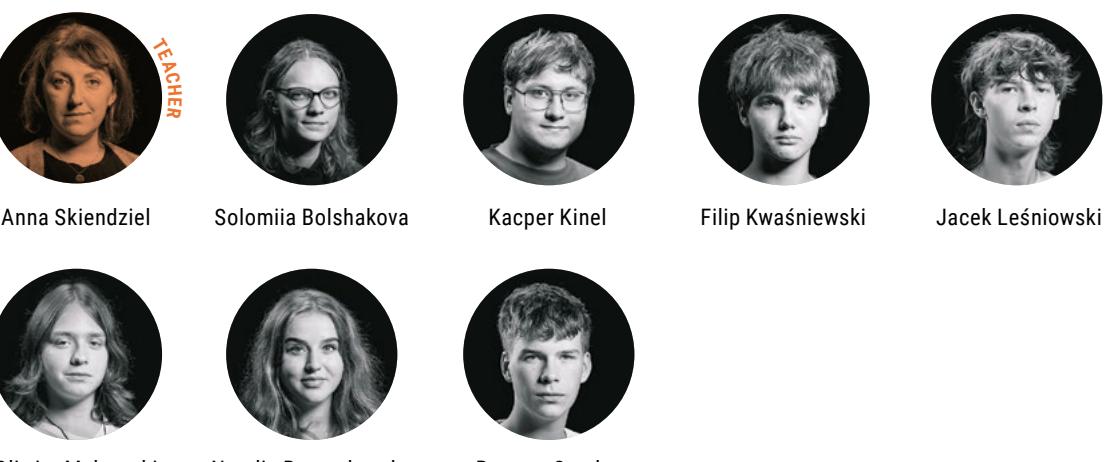
European School Munich, Munich/Germany



Isabella Podkowa Karolina Bakstein Andrei Alexandru Catana Vittorio Ermanno Greger Lydia Menescal Heath



Complex of Technical and Secondary Schools No. 2, Katowice/Poland



Anna Skiendziel Solomiia Bolshakova Kacper Kinel Filip Kwaśniewski Jacek Leśniowski



Berkeley High School, Berkeley/USA



Isaac Wolf

ORGANISER



The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity is an international initiative established in 2005 by the Ministers of Culture of four European countries (Poland, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia) to foster dialogue and disseminate knowledge about 20th-century European history and ways in which it is commemorated. The members of the network are Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, with representatives from Albania, Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia and Lithuania present on its advisory bodies. Envisaged as an ever-developing project, the network's activities go beyond the member countries, expanding the area of dialogue about 20th-century history further afield across Europe. So far, we have run 225 projects in 30 countries, engaging with over 500 partner institutions from over 40 nations. The ENRS is also supported by the European Commission through an operating grant, in recognition of our activities that bring Europeans together and contribute to fostering better understanding among individuals and societies.

sound in the silence

history through art

PROJECT'S WEBSITE

<https://enrs.eu/sound-in-the-silence>

CONTACT DETAILS

office@enrs.eu

PROJECT COORDINATORS

Justyna Radziukiewicz
Dagmara Cheftowska
Verena Böhnisch

HEAD OF PROJECTS DEPARTMENT

Joanna Orłos

DESIGN

Małgorzata Jurko

PHOTOS

Jan Prosiński

PROOFREADING

Caroline Brooke Johnson

PARTNERS



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