



UNIVERSITATEA
LUCIAN BLAGA
— DIN SIBIU —

21-29 JUNE 2025

U.talk



21-29 JUNE 2025

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA AND THEATRE STUDIES
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND ARTS

CENTRE OF ADVANCED STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF PERFORMING ARTS

LUCIAN BLAGA UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU



ION M. TOMUŞ: U.talk moderator & coordinator

COORDINATION TEAM

Bogdan Contea (PhD candidate)
Paula Olga Nagy (PhD candidate)
Andrada Oltean (PhD candidate)
Sabina Oltean (PhD candidate)
Sebastian Smarandache (student)

Sibiu International Theatre Festival has transformed the local and regional community and has become, in 32 years, a landmark event at an international level. It has also contributed decisively to the establishment of the performing arts department at the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu.

U.talk is an event that takes place daily, connected to the University Theatre And Cultural Management Festival - FITS and the International Platform of Doctoral Research in the Fields of Performing Arts and Cultural Management.

During this discussion session, theatre schools participating in the festival meet with doctoral students and doctoral supervisors, as well as professionals in the field involved in education, to discuss and analyze the productions presented to the public the previous day. Also, for each participating institution, U.talk offers the opportunity to recommend themselves and present their strategies in terms of artistic education, scientific research and artistic creation. The aim of U.talk is to set up a space for international academic dialogue, devoided of formality, as well as to create an active hub, beneficial to networking and future university projects and exchanges.

U.talk aims to be a bridge between the theatre school festival and the doctoral platform, in the generous context of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. FITS has transformed the local and regional community and has become, in more than three decades, a landmark event at an international level. It has also contributed decisively to the establishment of the Sibiu School of Theatre and Cultural Management.

The uniqueness of this festival is linked to its richness, diversity and capacity to generate projects, now and here. All these projects are conceived with an eye to the needs of the community, the region, the country; they are in dialog with the several countries around the world, with global players in education and research, but above all with friends of the festival.

We are celebrating the Doctoral Platform in the field of performing arts, cultural management, cultural diplomacy, thinking about how friendship has meant the driving force of the festival's development for three decades.

I would like to personally thank Minister Daniel David and Rector Sorin Radu, as well as their teams, for the extraordinary support. received for the University Theatre And Cultural Management Festival - FITS and for the Doctoral Platform, both of which stand in the middle of this great Festival.

CONSTANTIN CHIRIAC

President of Sibiu International Theatre Festival



This year, the doctoral platform is complemented by U.talk, conceived as a bridge between the theatre school festival and the doctoral platform within the generous framework of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. During U.talk, theatre schools participating in the festival will meet with doctoral students and doctoral supervisors, as well as professionals in the field involved in education, to discuss and analyze the productions presented to the public the previous day. Also, for each participating institution, U.talk offers the opportunity to recommend themselves and present their strategies in terms of artistic education, scientific research and artistic creation. The aim of U.talk is to set up a space for international academic dialogue, devoided of formality, as well as to create an active hub, beneficial to networking and future university projects and exchanges.

ION M. TOMUŞ

U.talk moderator & coordinator



21 June 2025

DAY 1

p.6

The first day of U.talk offered insight into the creative processes of artists Edith Buttingsrud (Germany), Ștefan Lupu (Romania), Catherine McNamara (England), and Senem Cevher (Turkey). Professor Ion M. Tomuș introduced the concept behind the U.talk series, emphasizing the importance of creating a space for dialogue among artists performing within the Universities Festival or participating in the doctoral platform.

Prof. Andrei Terian, Vice-Rector of the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, reminded the audience of the added value FITS brings to Sibiu, both culturally and economically. The artists who had presented their performances the previous day identified shared themes in their work, such as time, absurdity, and freedom, reflecting on both the intersections and the boundaries that emerge between different cultural contexts, in terms of both artistic creation and audience reception.

The intervention of Mr. Constantin Chiriac, Director General of the "Radu Stanca" National Theatre and President of Sibiu International Theatre Festival, highlighted the importance of opening intergenerational pathways and building platforms that support the development and visibility of the younger generation.



22 June 2025

DAY 2

"In the end, we are not so different" was the line through which Diana Mihalaşcu (Babeş-Bolyai University) set the friendly tone of the June 22 edition of U.talk, proposing a *Romeo and Juliet* framed by Romanian–Hungarian tensions. Armando Rotondi (Institute of the Arts, Barcelona) spoke about the way practice generates new theories, while theory itself remains inherent to practice, analyzing their importance in the development of students. Prof. Ioan Pop-Curşeu introduced the wide range of themes and approaches explored within the Doctoral School of Theatre and Film at Babeş-Bolyai University. Valentin Mocanu (Master's student, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iaşi) highlighted the importance of journalistic work in theatrical documentation and the difficulty of negotiating the relationship between what is preserved as truthful and what becomes stylized. Andreas Andreou (UNATC, Bucharest) shared his interest in the concept of "silence" in dramaturgy and in the depth of thoughts that remain unspoken, initiating an exchange of ideas among the acting students of UNATC.

p. 8



23 June 2025

p.10

DAY 3

Prof. Gelu Badea (Babeş-Bolyai University) spoke about the importance of the artistic background students bring with them when they enter university, describing it as a defining element in the formation of a genuine theatre director. Diana Mihalaşcu also shared aspects of her working experience alongside director Gelu Badea.

Prof. Ovidiu Caiţa (UAT) emphasized the idea that, in student productions, the performance of student actors should take precedence over other scenic layers of the show. Maria Constantin (UNATC) presented the sketches and creative process behind the costumes for *Youth Without Old Age and Life Without Death*. Violeta Buduleci spoke about the responsibility of coordinating the FITS Volunteer Programme.

John DeBoer (University of Montana) introduced what he calls the “new media economy” and underlined the need for different artistic disciplines to work together.



24 June 2025

p. 12

DAY 4

Kalina Stefanova (NATFA, Bulgaria) offered a broader perspective on the importance of establishing shared criteria in theatre criticism, at a time when the idea of "criticism" is too often reduced to emotional reaction. Andreea Gavrilu (UNATC) spoke about the creative process behind Toaca, a performance created in Poland in which she incorporated traditional Romanian elements, and which she believes will generate divided responses among Romanian audiences. Călin Ciobotaru (UNAGE) and Prof. Ion M. Tomuş (ULBS) identified similarities and differences between the doctoral schools in Iași and Sibiu. Filip Stoica (UNATC) emphasized the importance of music and lighting in choreographic performance, seeing them as extensions of the body and as means of intensifying the dramaturgical dimension.



25 June 2025

DAY 5

p. 14

Johanna Øyno (Oslo National Academy of the Arts) spoke about the creative process behind *The Phenomenon of Existence* and about her inspirations drawn from ecological theatre and Grotowski's methods. Prof. Anca Ciobotaru (UNAGE) reflected on the place of puppet theatre in an era of performance increasingly centred on corporeality and experimentation. She also drew a parallel between a translator and a doctoral supervisor, underlining the importance of providing students with the necessary tools to interpret both text and performance. Bianca Iosif (University of Strasbourg) presented the concept of her doctoral thesis, built around the directing style of Alexandra Badea.



26 June 2025

DAY 6

p. 16

Teresa Brayshaw (University of Salford) emphasized the importance of collaboration among students from different theatre disciplines, as a way of encountering new forms of discourse and shaping their own understanding of what it means to be an artist. She also spoke about her contribution to the publication of the *Cultural Conversations* volumes, an initiative that may inspire in its participants what is perhaps the most meaningful thought produced by genuine dialogue: "I had never thought about that before."

The volume is edited together with Prof. Ion M. Tomuş and is published annually by ULBS Press. Nicola Woods (University of Salford) stressed the importance of students gaining experience through working alongside professionals, as this helps them understand, define, and present their artistic practice more coherently to an audience.

Shane Kinghorn (Manchester Metropolitan University) presented the creative process behind *This Show Does Not Pass the Bechdel Test*, underlining the importance of "trial and error" in the development of the young actor.



27 June 2025

DAY 7

p. 18

Dumitru Acriş (ULBS) spoke about the need to “destroy the theatre within theatre” in order to reach the actor’s inner truth, only afterwards allowing established methods such as those of Stanislavski or Meyerhold to intervene. Sun-mi Hong presented the study programme of Dankook University and the performances developed there.

Jaewon Kim (Dankook University) discussed the creative process behind *The Wanderers*. Sonia Murcia (ESAD Murcia) offered insight into the making of her performance *Federico Between the Teeth*. Cosmin Chivu (Pace University, Sands College of Performing Arts) reminded students that their years of study should be a time of acceptance, mistakes, and reinvention, aimed at shaping an artistic personality rather than achieving “perfection.”

Midori Okyuama (Nihon University) spoke about the gap between the university environment and the film and theatre industries. Painter Alex Cînean presented his collaborations with the actors of the “Radu Stanca” National Theatre, whom he often uses as models for his works.



28 June 2025

DAY 8

p. 20

Jolanta Pulchna (National Academy of Theatre Arts, Krakow, Poland) presented the study programmes of the university she represents and explained the way the doctoral system functions there. She also offered several details about this year's production, *No One Gets Out Alive*.

Students from Cihangir Atölye Sahnesi spoke about the creative process behind *Foot and Leg Factory*. Cristina Blaga-Tomuş (ULBS) presented the work behind *Mutter*, especially the challenge of bringing together students from different years of study and guiding them toward the same acting standard, as well as the importance of patience throughout this process and the need to bring contemporary realities onto the stage.

Students of the ULBS Department of Theatre Arts also shared their perspective on the working process alongside Dumitru Acriş and Cristina Blaga-Tomuş, reflecting on their personal experiences, artistic development, and the connections built throughout this endeavour.



29 June 2025

DAY 9

p. 22

Tzveta Kassabova (University of Michigan) and Tatiana Sokolova (New Bulgarian University) presented the creative process behind *7 Hours Difference*, a two-part dance-theatre project: the first part created with students from Sofia, and the second with students from Michigan.

Diana Nechit, Head of the ULBS Department of Theatre Arts, spoke about the achievements of the Universities Festival and its growing scale, made possible by the opening of a new building for the Faculty of Letters and Arts, home to the Department of Theatre Arts. Vlad Pojoga, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Arts, emphasized the role FITS plays in building a community that remains united long after the ten days of the festival have ended.

Dragoş Varga, Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Arts, spoke about the place students occupy on the Sibiu theatre scene, bringing a degree of sincerity and inventiveness that is difficult to achieve even at a professional level. Prof. Ion M. Tomuş (ULBS) also outlined the idea of creating an English-language version of the magazine *Aplauze* for future editions.



U.talk 2025 COORDINATION TEAM



BOGDAN CONTEA
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Bogdan Contea is a PhD candidate in the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies at the Faculty of Letters and Arts, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu. He has published academic articles in the field of literary studies, including “*The Novel of Romanian Communism Before and After Mihai Iovănel’s History*” in *Transilvania*, and “*The Post-Communist Novel of Transition as Realism of Transition: Thematic Precedents in Romanian and East-Central European Literature*” in *Studia Universitatis Philologia*. In the field of theatre and performance studies, he was part of the editorial team of *Aplauze* magazine in 2024 and 2025 and published the article “*How to Start a Dialogue through Theatre? Observations on Active Art and Estrangement in Antisocial*” in *Journal of Performing Arts*. Bogdan has also served as a junior editor for *Journal of Performing Arts* since 2025. Bogdan’s research interests focus on contemporary stagings of tragedy in Romania, examined in dialogue with international theatrical practices. As a PhD student, he teaches seminars on the history of world theatre and on drama theory.



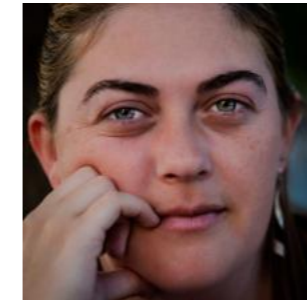
PAULA OLGA NAGY
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Paula Olga Nagy is a Ph.D. Candidate in Performing Arts at LBUS, where her research focuses on the possibilities of applying Design Thinking methods to the study of performing arts. Her academic interests lie at the intersection of artistic research, creative methodologies, and innovative approaches to knowledge production in the field of performance. In her doctoral work, she explores how Design Thinking can contribute to new perspectives on artistic processes, pedagogy, and interdisciplinary inquiry. Alongside her research activity, she has extensive experience in organising academic events and managing research projects, contributing to the development of collaborative scholarly environments and the dissemination of research outcomes. Her work reflects a strong commitment to fostering dialogue between theory and practice, as well as to supporting initiatives that bring together artists, researchers, and students in meaningful exchange.



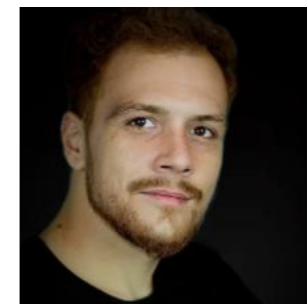
ANDRADA OLTEAN
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Andrada Oltean is a Romanian actress and PhD candidate in Theatre and Performing Arts at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu. Her doctoral research focuses on “The Actor’s Training as the Foundation of the Creative Process.” She holds a BA and MA in Acting from the same university and is currently a teaching assistant in the Department of Performance and Choreographic Arts. As a performer, she collaborates with Radu Stanca National Theatre in Sibiu, Godot Theatre in Bucharest, Gong Theatre in Sibiu, Satiricus Ion L. Caragiale National Theatre in Chişinău, and Elvira Godeanu Dramatic Theatre in Târgu Jiu. Her work includes productions directed by renowned directors such as Silviu Purcărete and Andriy Zholdak, as well as the more recent performance *The Handball Match* at Metropolis Theatre, directed by Gabriel Sandu.



SABINA OLTEAN
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Sabina Oltean holds a Bachelor’s (2014) and a Master’s Degree (2016) from the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, where she is currently pursuing her PhD. Since 2019, she has also served as the administrator for the same department. Deeply embedded in the local cultural scene, Sabina has been an active contributor to the Sibiu International Theatre Festival since 2009. Beginning her journey as a volunteer, she has steadily grown professionally, taking on increasingly complex roles with each passing edition. Concurrently, she has been the assistant for The Drama and Arts Management University Convention, a key event associated with the main festival. During her university years, she honed her cultural management skills working as a project manager assistant at the Radu Stanca National Theatre. In this capacity, she contributed to several major productions, including *Oidip* (directed by Silviu Purcărete), *Master and Margarita* (directed by Zoltan Balazs), *Tattoo* (directed by Radu Afrim), *The Ghost is Here* (directed by Kushida Kazuyoshi), *Nathan the Wise* (directed by Armin Petras), and *Marat/Sade* (directed by Charles Muller).



SEBASTIAN SMARANDACHE
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Sebastian Smarandache is a third-year student in Theatre Studies and Cultural Management. He is currently working on his bachelor’s thesis titled “*Theatricality and Surrealism in Cinematic Discourse*.” Throughout his academic and professional journey, he has been actively involved in organizing and coordinating cultural events. Within DATfest, he held the roles of Coordinator of the Performance Department and Editorial Coordinator of the cultural magazine Datfest X. In FITS, he worked as Production Coordinator for the Universities Festival, assistant for the U.Talk program, and contributor to the *Aplauze* magazine. He has collaborated with several theatre festivals across the country as a manager for student productions. In parallel, he is an independent filmmaker, with works selected in various national festivals and awarded at GOAT Film Festival and SIMFEST.

U.talk 2025 Invited Speakers

21.06

Catherine Mcnamara, Head of Guildford School of Acting, University of Surrey
Edith Buttingsrud, Theater director, Athanor Academy
Ștefan Lupu, Choreographer, National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest
Senem Cevher, Theater director, Bahçeşehir University Conservatory in Istanbul
Andrei Terian, Vice-rector for Research, Innovation and Internationalization, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

22.06

Armando Rotondi, Professor, Institute of the Arts Barcelona
Ioan Pop-Curșeu, Head of the Doctoral School of Theatre and Film, Babeș-Bolyai University
Diana Mihalașcu, Theater director, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai
Andreas Andreou, Theater director, National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest
Valentin Mocanu, MA student, National University of Arts George Enescu

23.06

Ovidiu Caița, Theater director, University of Arts from Târgu-Mureș
John DeBoer, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Montana
Maria Constantin, Set designer / Fashion design student, National University of Arts
Violeta Buduleci, Head of the Local FITS Volunteer Programme, Sibiu International Theatre Festival
Gelu Badea, Theater director, Babeș-Bolyai University

24.06

Andrea Gavrilu, Choreographer, National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest
Kalina Stefanova, Professor, National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts, Bulgaria
Călin Ciobotari, Head of the Doctoral School of Theatre, National University of Arts George Enescu
Filip Stoica, Choreographer, MA student, National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest

25.06

Johanna Øyno, Theater director, Oslo National Academy of the Arts
Anca Ciobotaru, Professor, National University of Arts George Enescu
Bianca Iosif, PhD student & Researcher, University of Strasbourg

26.06

Shane Kinghorn, Profesor, Manchester Metropolitan University
Teresa Brayshaw, Professor, University of Salford
Nicola Woods, Professor, University of Salford

27.06

Sonia Murcia, Professor, Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático of Murcia
Sunmi Hong, Professor, Dankook University
Jaewon Kim, MA student, Dankook University
Cosmin Chivu, Professor, Pace University, Sands College of Performing Arts
Midori Okyuama, Professor, Nihon University
Dumitru Acriș, PhD student & Theater director, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Alexandru Cînean, PhD student, University of Arts and Design in Cluj-Napoca

28.06

Cristina Blaga-Tomuș, Lecturer & Researcher, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Jolanta Pulchna, International cooperation specialist, National Academy of Theatre Arts, Cracovia
Muhammet Uzuner, Theater director, Cihangir Atölye Sahnesi

29.06

Tatiana Sokolova, Professor & Theatre director, New Bulgarian University
Diana Nechit, Head of the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Tzveta Kassabaova, Professor & Theatre director, University of Michigan
Dragoș Varga, Dean, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu
Vlad Pojoga, Vice Dean, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

