

WISE Wales

presenta

**POLITICS TAUGHT TO MY GRANDCHILDREN
A Bildungsroman about Europe**

W.I.S.E., like Europe, is a patchwork of many stories influenced by different mentalities, experiences and life views, bound by a mutual view of democratic structures. W.I.S.E. originated from a Europe-wide discussion on the topic of politics – on hopes, lessons learned and contradictory experiences in our European democracies. Over 60 witnesses, from the countries involved (Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Poland), born between 1915 and 1949, told us something of their political biographies; thus laying the foundation for the twelve chapters of this European 'Bildungsroman'.

The chapters dedicated to Wales are:

**Chapter II - THE TONGUE EVER TURNS TO THE ACHING TOOTH
by Sonia Antinori**

Four elderly ladies living in South Wales, each awarded some kind of recognition of merit, are invited to a popular TV talk show on the day after the European elections. Their discussions on national, linguistic and territorial identity, on community and on the sense of belonging melt down amidst the hope-sapping yak of the television medium. A playlet about modernity's contradictions.

**Chapter VII - OF FAITH AND FAIRY DUST
by Heidrun Kaletsch**

The Welsh miners' strike and the tug-of-war between trade unions and the Thatcher government. A crisis of the productive system gives rise to an open struggle between workers and administrators, set against the question of the identity of UK minorities and of working rights. All this while the press and the other media cast their distorting shadow.

**Chapter VIII - NO GUTS, NO GLORY
by Katja von der Ropp**

A trade unionist of Irish descent looks for his homeland of choice, between an adventurous past in the merchant navy and fights for the independence of African populations. The moral bequest of a man scarred by a tragic experience of injustice, set in landscapes that betray residues of the British colonialist tradition.

A NOTE BY WISE PROJECT'S ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The peculiarity of the situation in which our Welsh colleagues have operated is represented by the doubling up of the workshops: August012 Company, tasked by Cardiff

University with the laboratorial and theatrical activities, has chosen to activate two workshops in order to allow the participation of interested individuals both from the Capitol and from the very active community of Rhondda Valley, already well-versed in artistic and literary initiatives. The two groups have worked independently and without meeting in the first phase. This has multiplied the stories and the cultural horizons, so that the result of the skimming of the participants' testimonies was a great variety experiences, perspectives and narratives. If, on one hand, the imaginative possibilities starting to unfold at that moment regarded the modern city and the openness of its harbour, on the other hand we had the outline of a very powerful and mythical inland. What was common to both, though, was a wind of rebellion, of fierce opposition, be it in relation to the Second World War, where the enemy was continental, or to the miners' strikes or to the fights for affirming linguistic, economic and politic autonomy against a next-door adversary. This strong, choral approach has profoundly shaped the plays – in Chapter II, where the political and identitary enthusiasms are crushed by the threatening unreality of a television talk show, as well as in the workers' choruses of Chapter VII and also, paradoxically, in the monologue of Chapter VIII, in which an Irish-born Welshman's totally humane testimony ends up assuming the epic valour of a voice so personal it becomes universal. Maybe this aspect has influenced Mathilde Lopez's choice as well: the director, merging the three texts in a single, long scene, managed to tell the many different souls of her territory, with a post-dramatic theatrical approach in which the immediate changes from one character to another and from one level to another resulted both organic and alienating as the same time. Its three extraordinary professional actors, teamed up with a playful group of participants, have brought forth an essential and captivating performance, in which the importance of the theatrical gesture reaffirms itself as a sharing adventure, and, in this case, as an alchemy of fully experienced lives.

Sonia Antinori