INFORMATION MANAGEMENT OF THE HELLENIC FESTIVAL WEBSITE

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Abstract

This case study will explore issues regarding the management of Hellenic Festival's website information. It will provide an overall presentation of the website contents and will describe the data curation process step-by-step, from its initial data collection and preparation phase to the final uploading and testing stage. It will also examine the implications of the process as a result of the complexity of data, as well as human and financial resources' constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

The Hellenic Festival was founded in 1955, with the aim of organizing mainly music, drama and dance performances in Athens and Epidaurus in Greece during the summer period (June to August).

The current website of the Festival (www.hellenicfestival.gr or www.greekfestival.gr) was launched in 2007. It displays bilingual information (Greek/English) on the Festival's seasonal programme, participating artists, the archive which has been recently added as an on-going project, as well as other information (regarding the Organization and its venues, the Press etc.) and the online booking system. The website has attracted 300.000 visitors so far (May 2007 - May 2008).

The website is supervised by the Head of Communications and is managed daily by the website Administrator. The Administrator is responsible for content management, the architectural structure and data entry, overseeing with the Head of Communications two external associates who work on the website's technical development and graphic environment.

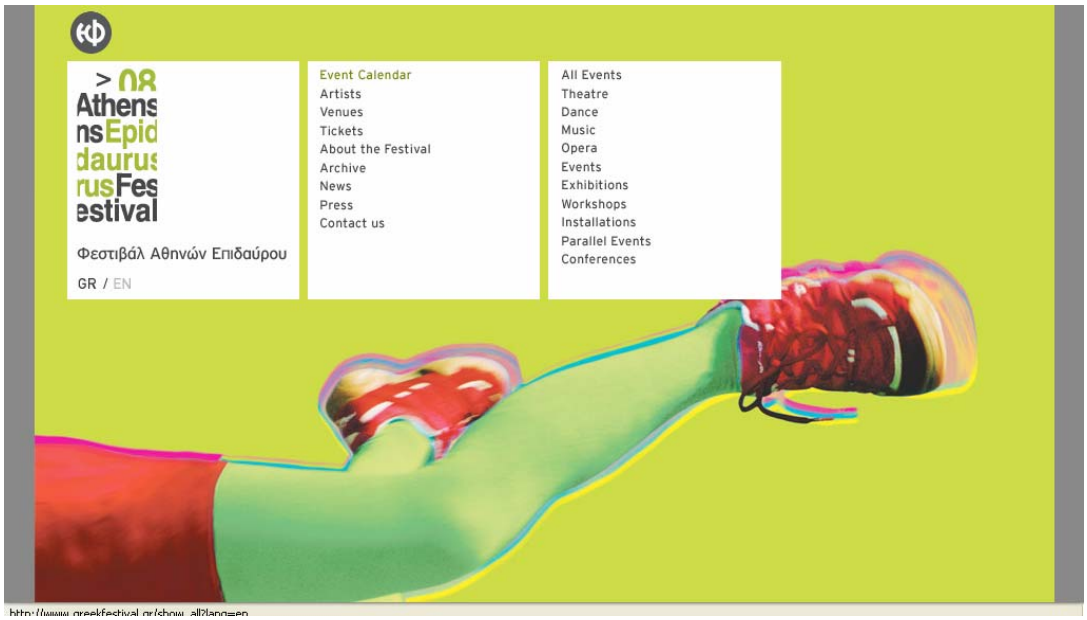
This article discusses the management of the Festival's website information and explores issues around its digital curation process, regarding the active management and appraisal of data over its entire life cycle (Pennock, 2006).

Aims

a. To provide a case study regarding content management of the Hellenic Festival website, by presenting its contents and by describing the data curation process.
b. To set the data curation process within a general managerial context, to which it is dependant.
c. To suggest ways which will facilitate the data curation process and ensure content maintenance.

A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE WEBSITE

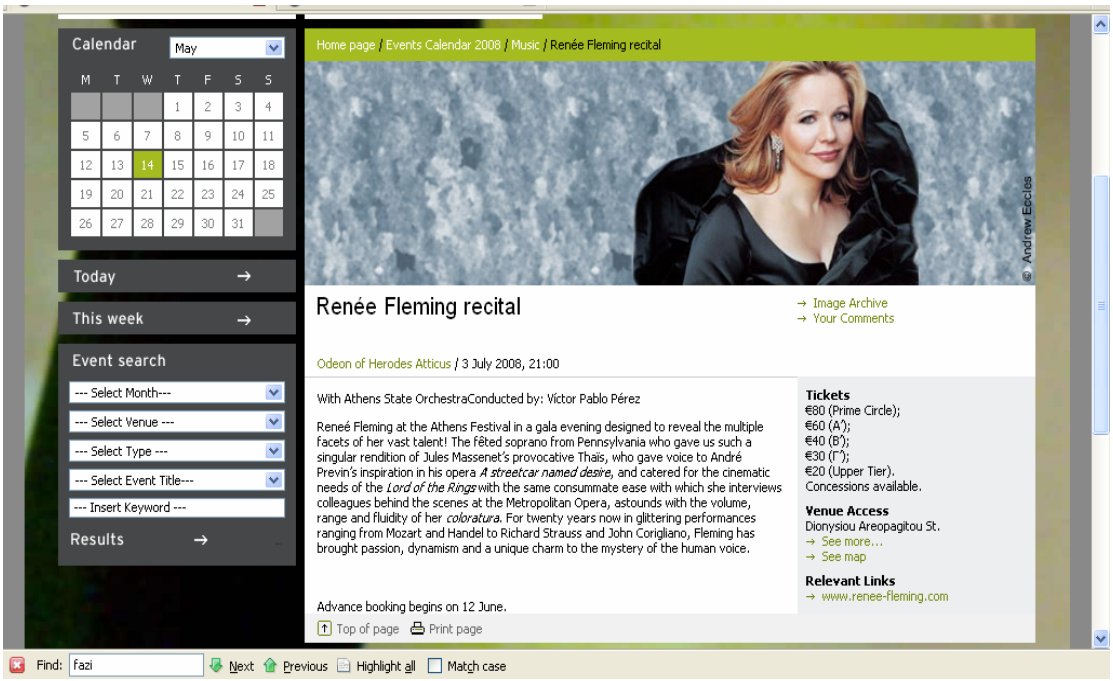
The website displays the current programme of performances as well as an archive of past performances (which for the time being includes the 2007 season only).



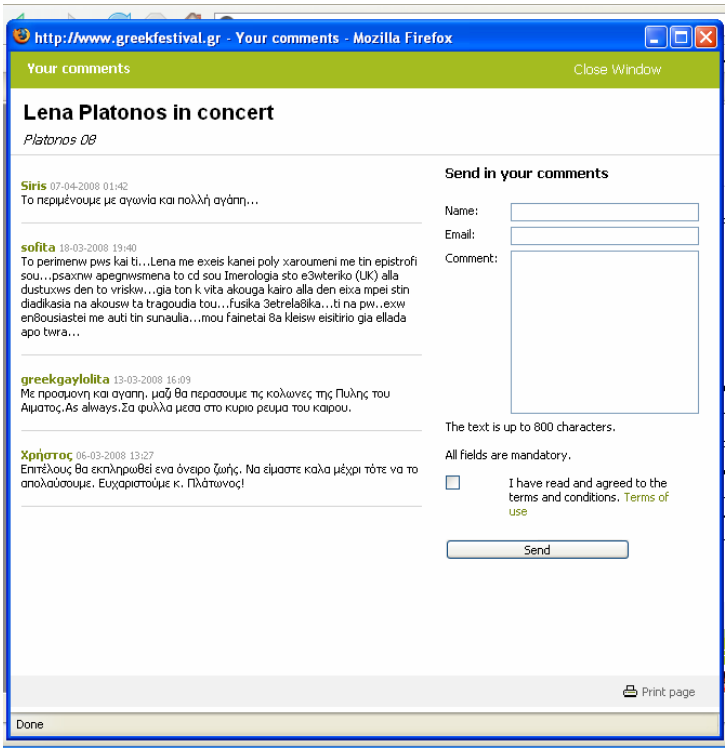
Print screen 1: *Home page of Hellenic Festival's website*

Information that refers either to the current or the past season is structured in a homogenous way and consists of the following elements:

- Brief descriptions of the performances, billing information and photos
- other supplementary material, such as visitors' comments, ticket prices, useful links, the duration of performances and their sponsors.

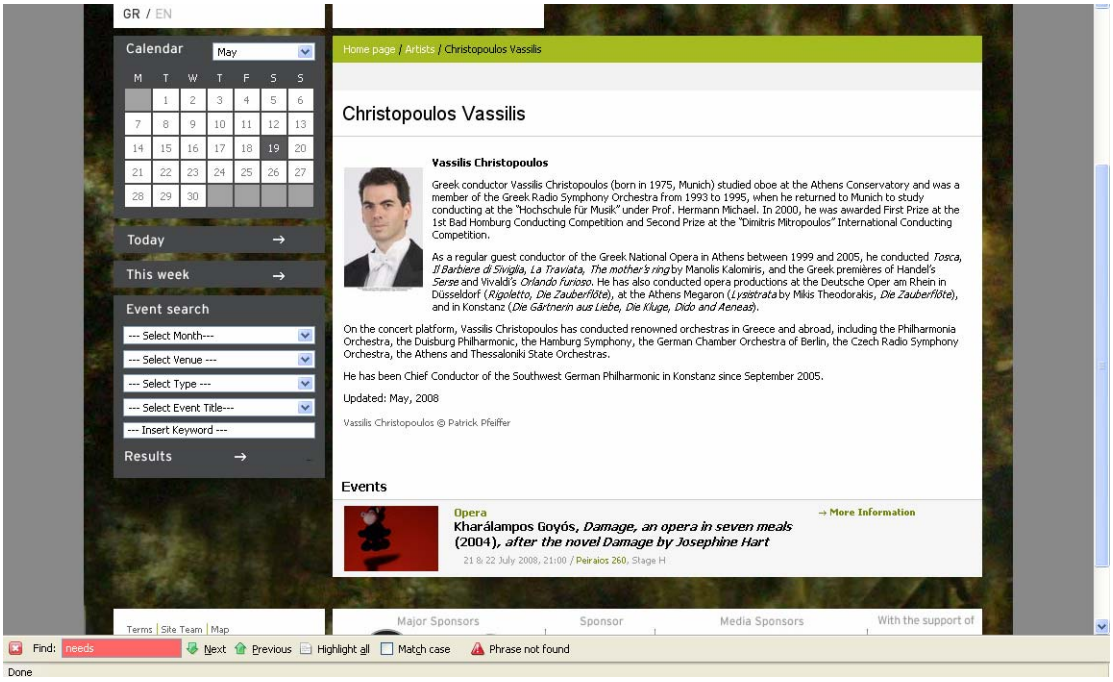


Print screen 2: *The performance page (billing info, description, other info)*



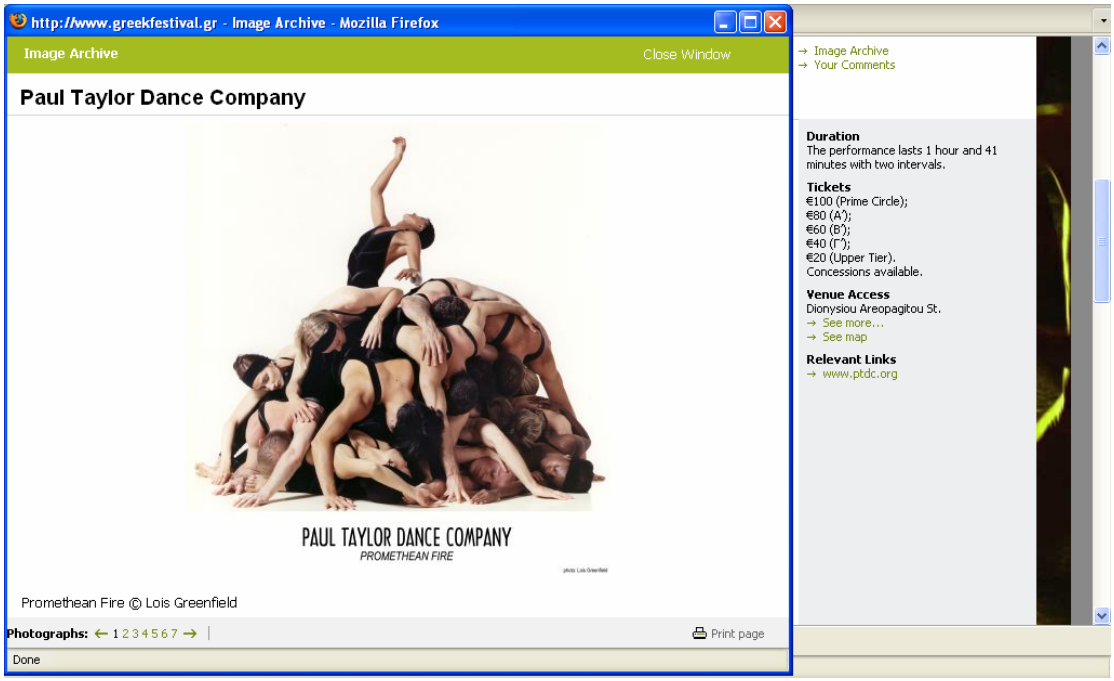
Print screen 3: *The performance page (visitors' comments)*

- All participant performers (artists, theatrical organizations, music ensembles, dance companies etc), creators (authors, choreographers, composers etc) and technicians
- The principals' CVs.



Print screen 4: *The artist page (CV and performances where he/she participates)*

- A photographic archive is also displayed for each performance and its participating artists.



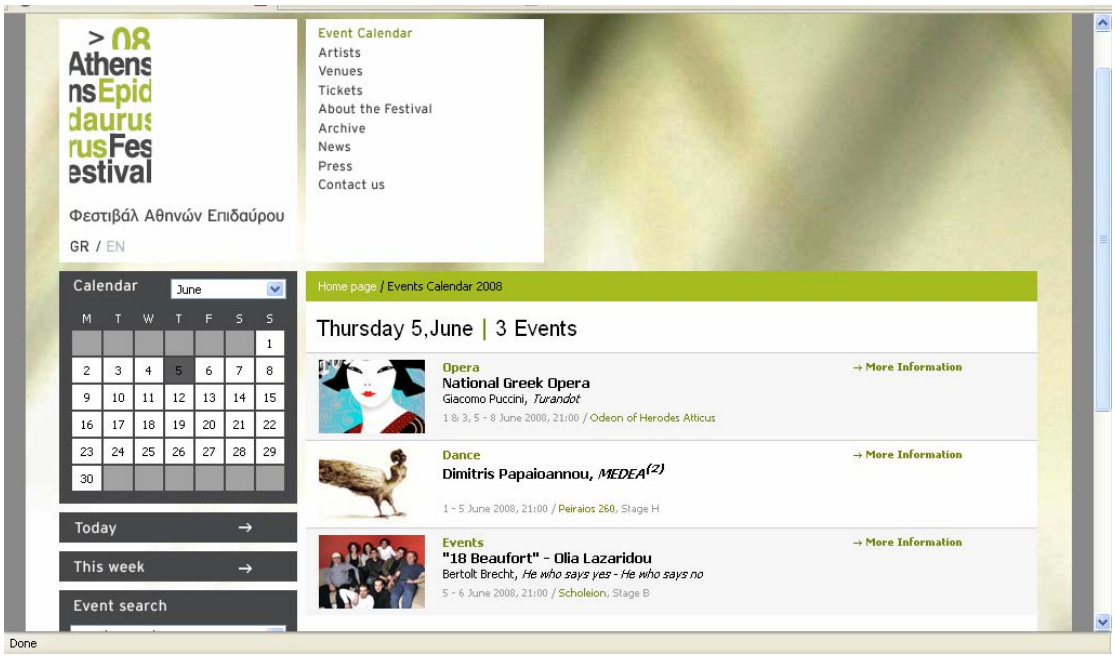
Print screen 5: *The image archive in a performance*

To retrieve information for all of the above, a search engine has been developed through which it is possible to make either a simple search, or an advanced search with multiple criteria, and thus retrieve information in different ways. Visitors are therefore given a choice (Shedroff, 2005).

Some search examples are presented below:

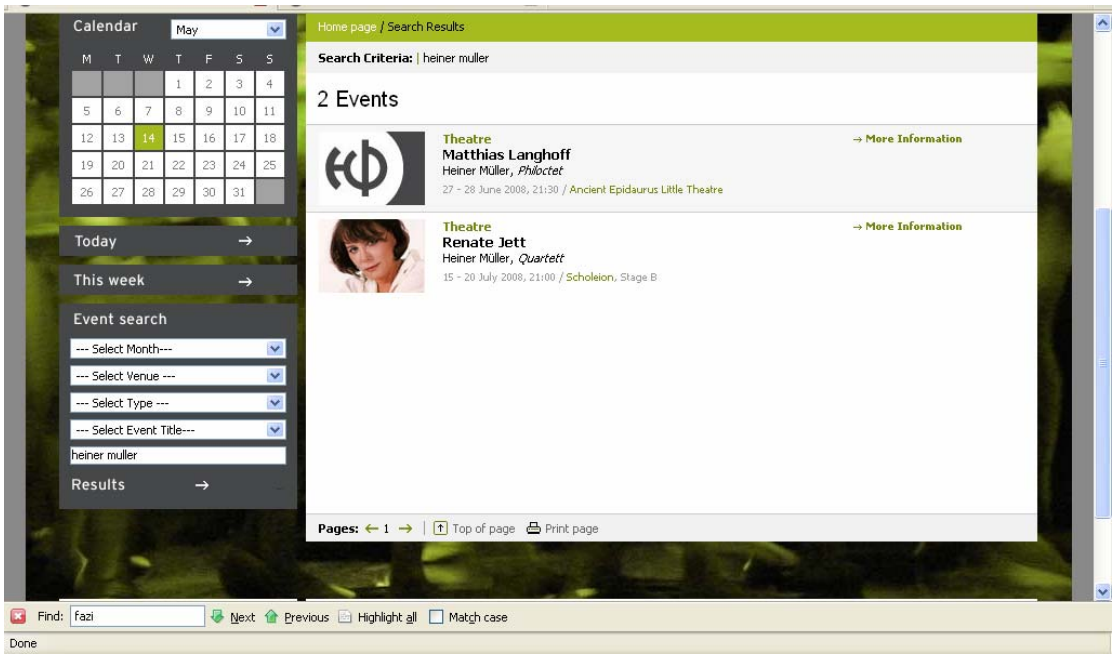
Simple search:

1. *The performances of June 5, 2008* (simply click the date on the calendar):



Print screen 6: *Simple search (in performance search: date)*

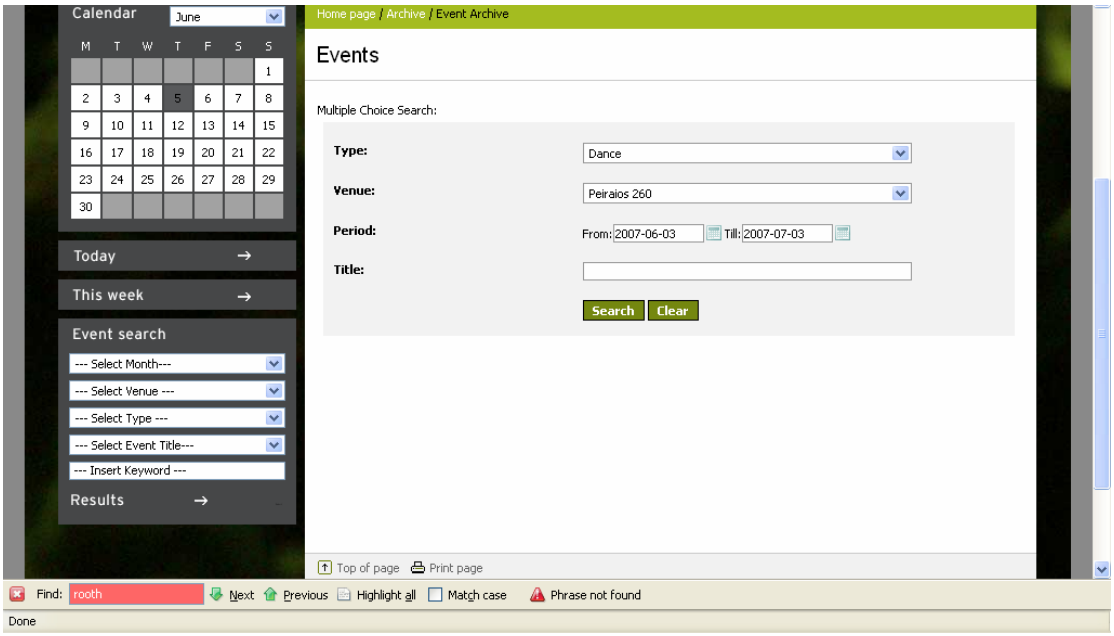
2. *The performances of "Heiner Müller"* (type the name of the person in the filter "insert keyword"):



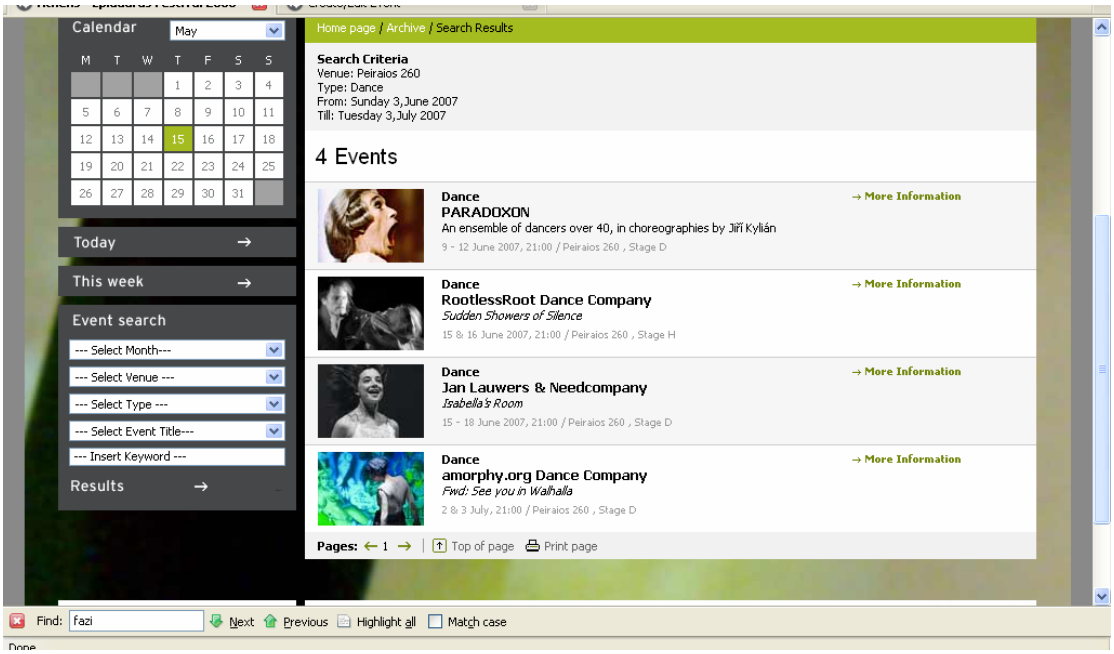
Print screen 7: *Simple search (one criterion in performance search: artist)*

Advanced search:

1. *All dance performances which took place in "Peiraios 260" venue, from June 3 until July 3, 2007* (select the values from the closed list criteria "Type" "Venues" and "Period").

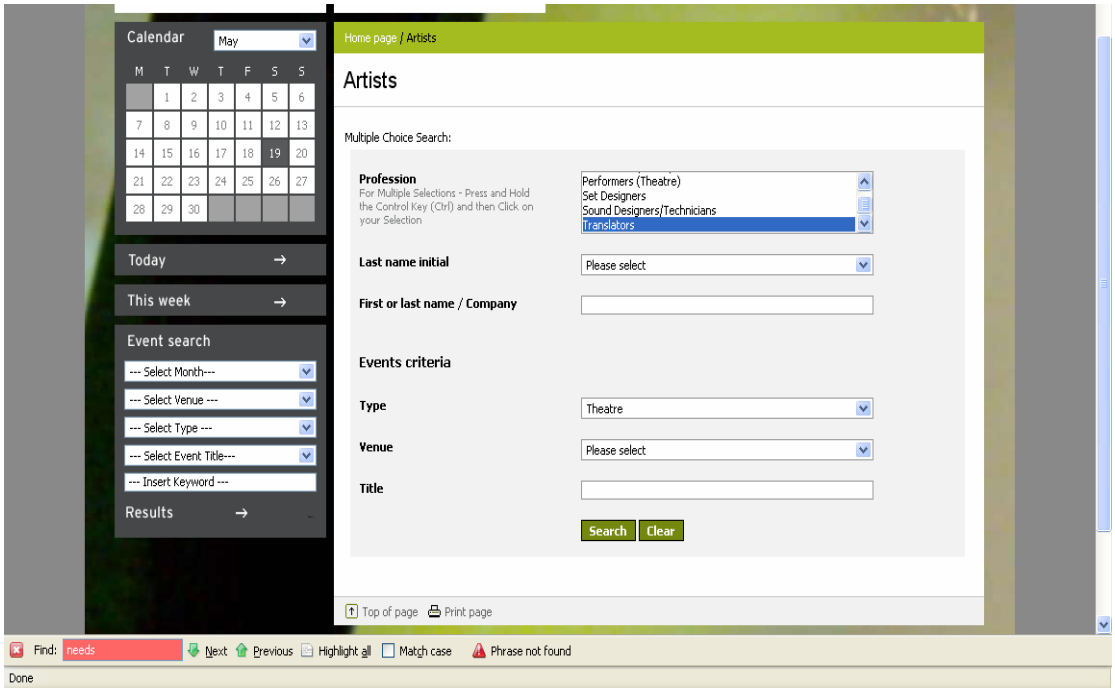


Print screen 8: *Advanced search (three criteria in archive performances' search: type, venue, dates)*

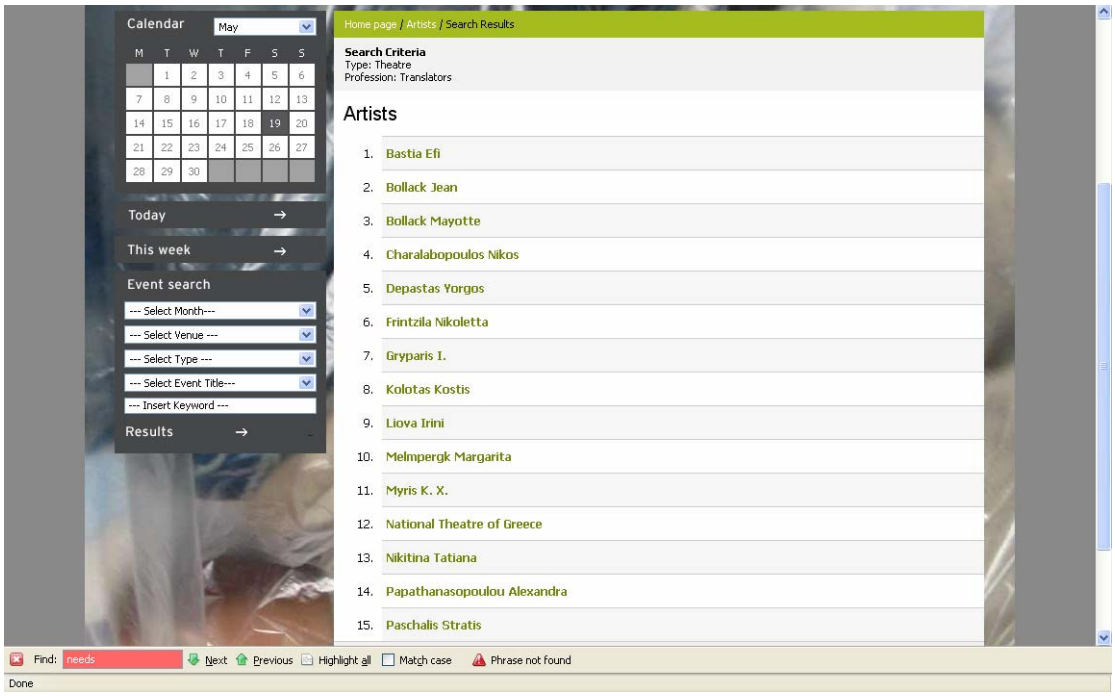


Print screen 9: *Advanced search results (three criteria in archive performances' search: type, venue, dates)*

2. *The translators of drama works* (select the values from the closed list criteria "Profession" and "Event Type").



Print screen 10: *Advanced search (two criteria in artist search: profession, performance type)*



Print screen 11: *Advanced search results (two criteria in artist search: profession, performance type)*

The examples above demonstrate that the broad content of the Hellenic Festival's website has been structured in a way that makes it easy to navigate and retrieve information for both inexperienced and experienced users, and to do so in different ways.

From this point there follows a description of methods used to prepare and produce the final digital content of the website.

THE WEBSITE DATA CURATION PROCESS

A step-by-step process is followed, in order to collect data and prepare digitilized information for website users. The process refers to the current season of performances as well as the archive and it involves four stages:

1. Collection of material
2. Identification of data
3. Documentation and editing
4. Uploading and testing

Collection of material

As far as the programme of the current season is concerned, information comes from the Production Department, which is responsible for the organization of performances and contact with artists, artistic and production companies etc. The information is already digitilized and is placed on the Festival's common drive, available to all Departments. It concerns images, logos and an excel file that includes information on performances (titles, venues, dates, artists' biographies, and programme content, etc). It is important to note that this kind of information is not revised and needs editing before publication.

Concerning the archive of past events, the primary source of information is the Festival's printed material (Catalogues and Programmes), as well as CDs with images (for 2007-2000) and printed images (for 1999-1955). This material is usually stored at the Festival's analogue archive. Unfortunately, as we step back in years, researching

material inevitably becomes difficult and finding printed images and performance Catalogues for past decades is a very demanding and time-consuming task. Where parts of the Archive are difficult to locate, it is necessary to contact other sources, such as collectors: over its 53 years, the Festival has attracted a noteworthy number of fans who collect Festival publications and who therefore, between them, possess a significant archive of images. Hence, for some decades, it is easier to borrow material from a collector than research it in the analogue Archive.

Identification of data

No matter whether we work on the current season or the Archive, it is important to know our data well and obtain a precise idea of the performances' characteristics. Becoming acquainted with the type and nature of events is preliminary in order to meet the documentation needs.

Documentation and Editing

Primary elements

The primary elements of the performances (titles, venues, dates, ticket prices etc.) are recorded in an MS Access table, in order to facilitate amendments (e.g. a huge number of corrections to typographical errors), which are made according to documentation practices and other internal rules. These primary resources were designed so that its core content is as independent as possible from the means of accessing the final web content. This keeps the finished resource as flexible as possible, allowing it to change and develop to meet unanticipated requirements while avoiding becoming locked into obsolete software, hardware or methods of interacting with data (Hamish, 2005).

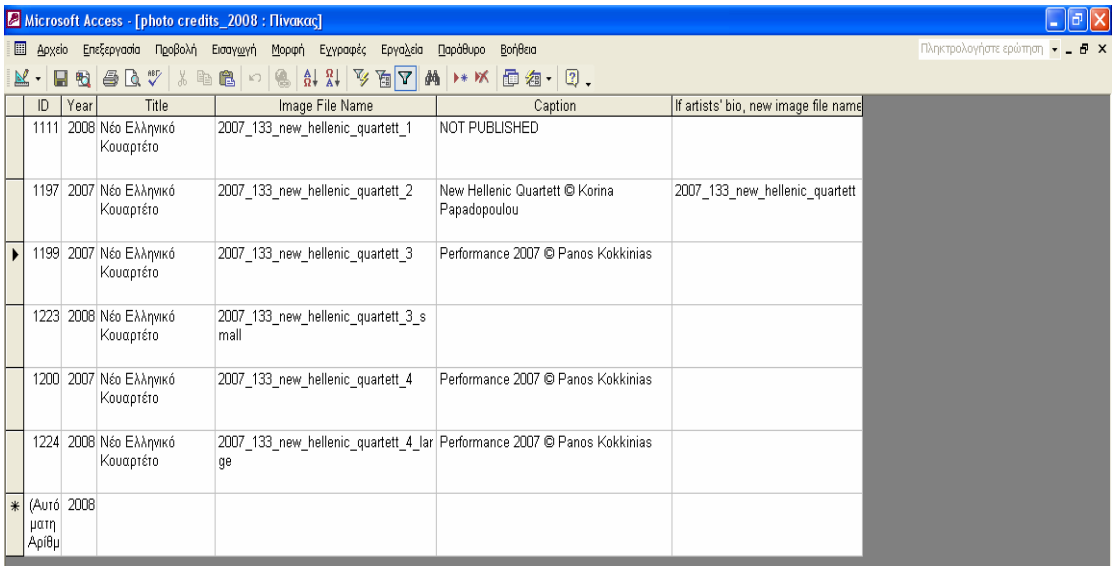
ID	chec	event_title_en	search title_en	event_subtitle_	event_type	event_venue	year	event_date_s	other_date	event_advanced booking	event_duration_en	event_ticket_prices_en
153		Josef Nadj & Miquel Barceló, Paso Doble	J. Nadj & M. Barceló, "Paso Doble"		Event	Peiraios 260 (Stage D)	2008	1/6/2008	2/6/2008	11/5/2008		€30; €20 (Concessions); €15 (Student etc.)
118	vai	National Greek Opera	National Greek Opera, "Turandot"	Giacomo Puccini, Turandot	Opera	Odeon of Herodes Atticus	2008	1/6/2008	3, 5, 6, 7, 8/6/2008	11/5/2008		€130, €110 (Prime Circle); €90 (A'); €75 (B'); €60 (Γ'); €50 (Upper Tier); €20 (Concessions), €40,
142	vai	Dimitris Papaioannou, MEDEA(2)	Dimitris Papaioannou, MEDEA(2)		Dance	Peiraios 260 (Stage H)	2008	1/6/2008	2, 3, 4, 5/6/2008	11/5/2008		€30; €20 (Concessions); €15 (Student etc.)
210		"18 Beaufort" - Olia Lazaridou	"18 Beaufort" - Olia Lazaridou	Bertolt Brecht, He who says yes - He who says no	Events	Scholeion (Stage B)	2008	5/6/2008	6/6/2008	15/5/2008		Admission free
90	vai	Theseum Ensemble	Theseum Ensemble	Dimitris Dimitriadis, I'm Dying Like a Country	Theatre	Peiraios 260 (Stage D)	2008	6/6/2008	7/6/2008	16/5/2008		€30; €20 (Concessions); €15 (Student etc.)

Print screen 12: *Ms Access Table (indicative primary information of five performances)*

Audio-visual material

The next step is to prepare audio-visual material (usually images), which is placed in separate folders, one for each performance. Printed images for Archive use are scanned and placed together with the other digitilized material.

Each image is then re-named to a set standard for all images of the same performance and season. This is so that (a) the material is homogenized and easily recognizable and (b) it facilitates downloading to computers that do not support Greek fonts or special characters (such as the copyright symbol ©) that were part of the previous image name. These elements (image names and captions, photographers' credits and title of performances) are registered, again in an Ms Access table.



Microsoft Access - [photo credits_2008 : Πίνακας]

Αρχείο Επεξεργασία Προβολή Εισαγωγή Μορφή Εγγραφές Εργαλεία Παράθυρο Βοήθεια

ID	Year	Title	Image File Name	Caption	If artists' bio, new image file name
1111	2008	Νέο Ελληνικό Κουαρτέτο	2007_133_new_hellenic_quartett_1	NOT PUBLISHED	
1197	2007	Νέο Ελληνικό Κουαρτέτο	2007_133_new_hellenic_quartett_2	New Hellenic Quartett © Korina Papadopoulou	2007_133_new_hellenic_quartett
1199	2007	Νέο Ελληνικό Κουαρτέτο	2007_133_new_hellenic_quartett_3	Performance 2007 © Panos Kokkinias	
1223	2008	Νέο Ελληνικό Κουαρτέτο	2007_133_new_hellenic_quartett_3_small		
1200	2007	Νέο Ελληνικό Κουαρτέτο	2007_133_new_hellenic_quartett_4	Performance 2007 © Panos Kokkinias	
1224	2008	Νέο Ελληνικό Κουαρτέτο	2007_133_new_hellenic_quartett_4_large	Performance 2007 © Panos Kokkinias	
(Αυτόματη Αρίθμ	2008				

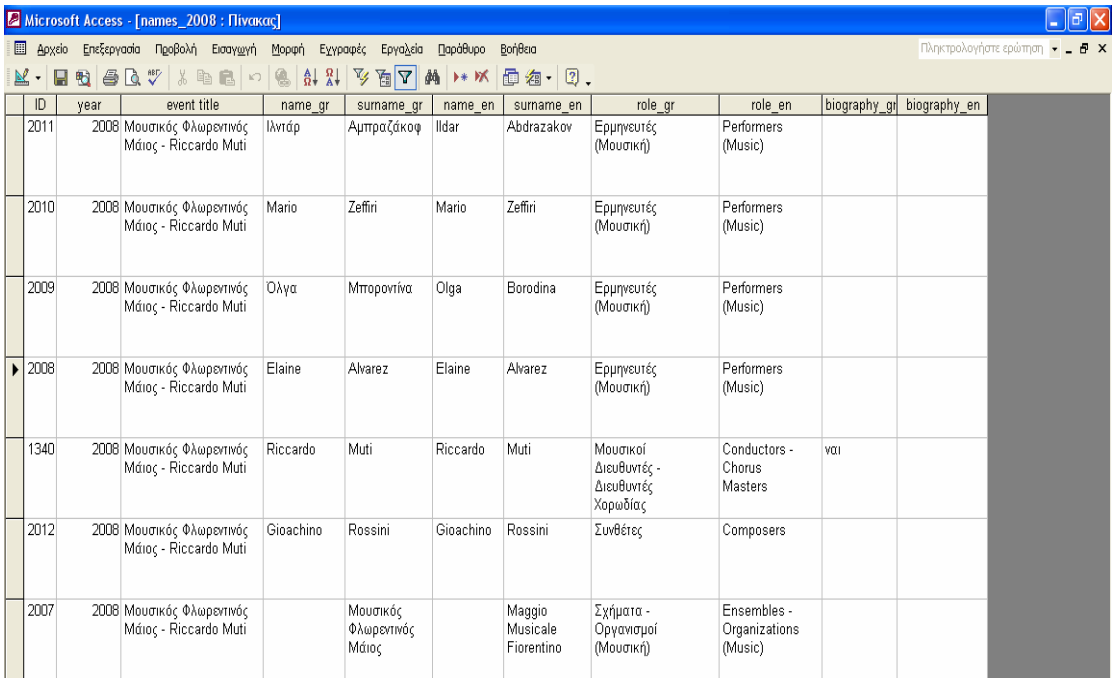
Print screen 13: *Ms Access Table (image names of one performance)*

After that, all images are re-sized in order to fit with the standard dimensions of the website image archive.

Participating artists and other names

Afterwards, the names of participating artists and others in each performance are documented. These names include solo artists (interpreters, authors, choreographers, composers etc), companies (theatre & dance companies, orchestras etc), and technicians.

Another Ms Access table is used, to record the name of each artist, per performance, in Greek and Latin characters, and add their profession (e.g. director, costume designer, conductor, etc.). At the end, we make amendments.



Microsoft Access - [names_2008 : Πίνακας]

Αρχείο Επεξεργασία Προβολή Εισαγωγή Μορφή Εγγραφές Εργαλεία Παράθυρο Βοήθεια

ID	year	event title	name_gr	surname_gr	name_en	surname_en	role_gr	role_en	biography_gr	biography_en
2011	2008	Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος - Riccardo Muti	Ιλντάρ	Αμπραζάκοφ	Ildar	Abdrazakov	Ερμηνευτές (Μουσική)	Performers (Music)		
2010	2008	Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος - Riccardo Muti	Mario	Zeffiri	Mario	Zeffiri	Ερμηνευτές (Μουσική)	Performers (Music)		
2009	2008	Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος - Riccardo Muti	Όλγα	Μπορντίνα	Olga	Borodina	Ερμηνευτές (Μουσική)	Performers (Music)		
2008	2008	Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος - Riccardo Muti	Elaine	Alvarez	Elaine	Alvarez	Ερμηνευτές (Μουσική)	Performers (Music)		
1340	2008	Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος - Riccardo Muti	Riccardo	Muti	Riccardo	Muti	Μουσικοί Διευθυντές - Διευθυντές Χορωδίας	Conductors - Chorus Masters	ναι	
2012	2008	Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος - Riccardo Muti	Gioachino	Rossini	Gioachino	Rossini	Συνθέτες	Composers		
2007	2008	Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος - Riccardo Muti		Μουσικός Φλωρεντινός Μάιος		Maggio Musicale Fiorentino	Σχήματα - Οργανισμοί (Μουσική)	Ensembles - Organizations (Music)		

Print screen 14: *Ms Access Table (artist names and profession for one performance)*

The next task is to collect in Ms Word documents several artists' CVs. These are produced by the Festival's Publications Department.

Billing information and texts

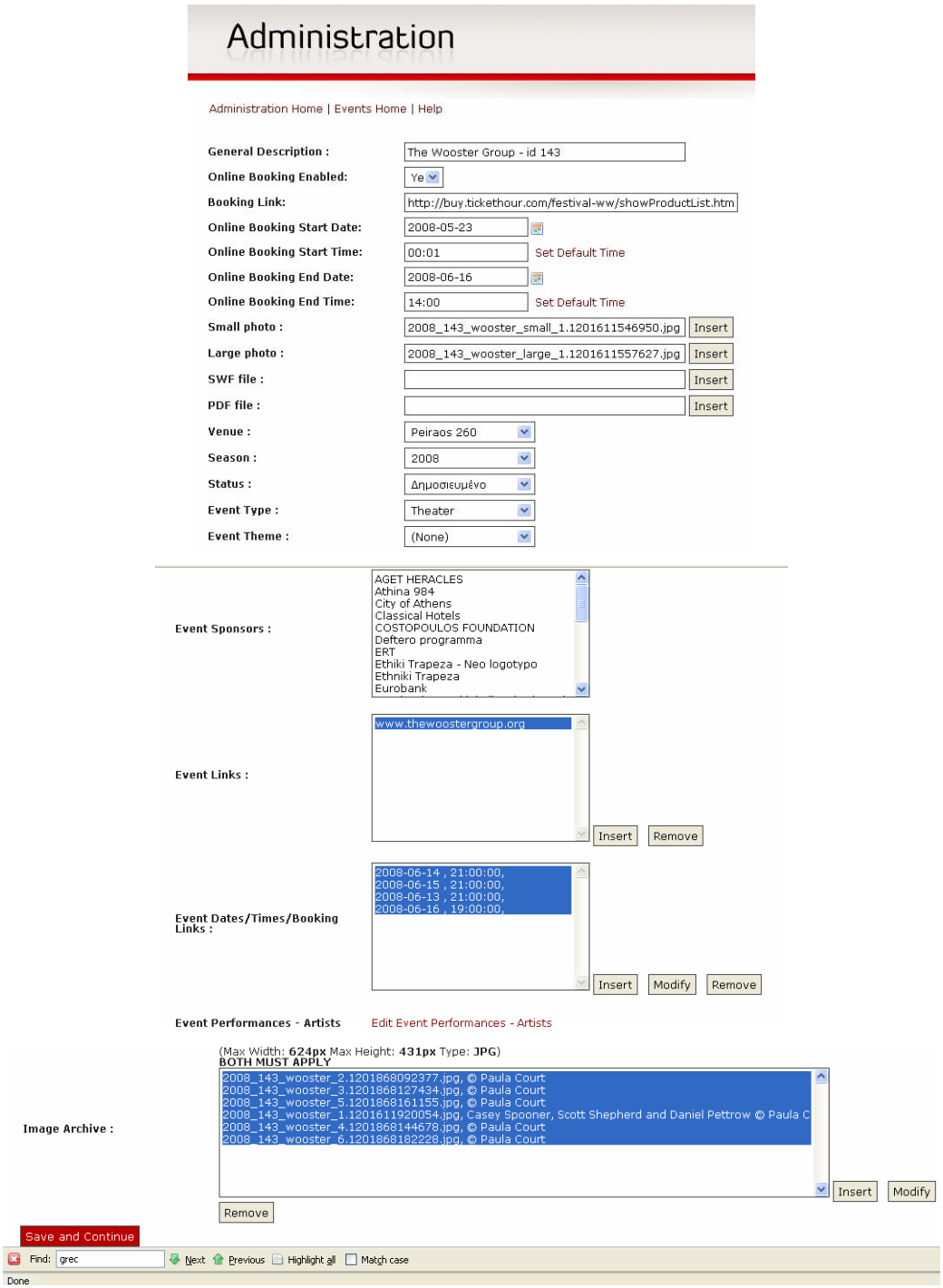
The last phase is the curation of billing information and texts describing the performance. As far as the current season is concerned, Ms Word documents are used for this purpose: here we copy edited material that again is produced by the Festival's Publications Department.

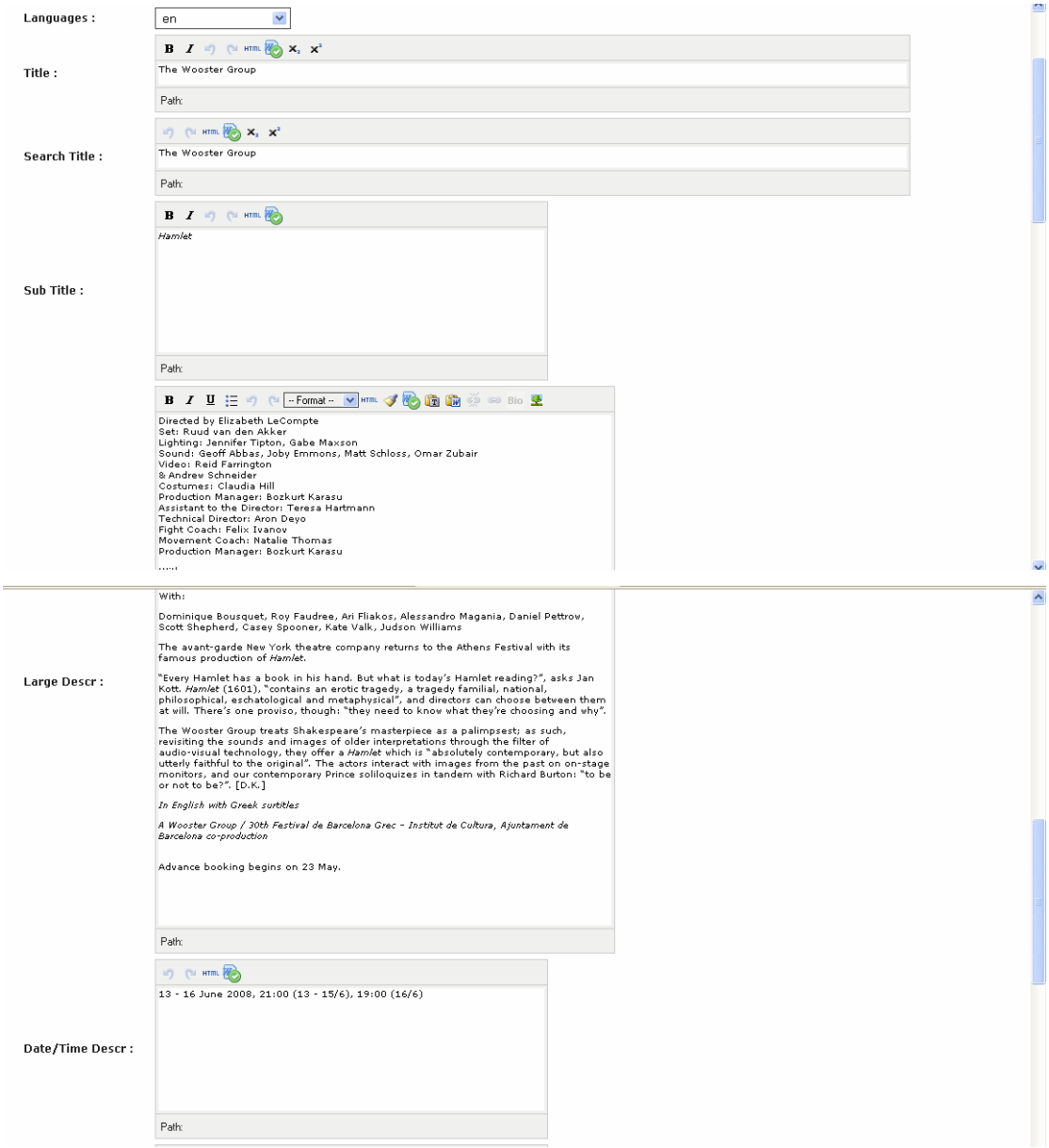
Also, for the Archive, relevant material drawn from the Catalogues and Programmes is typed in Ms Word documents.

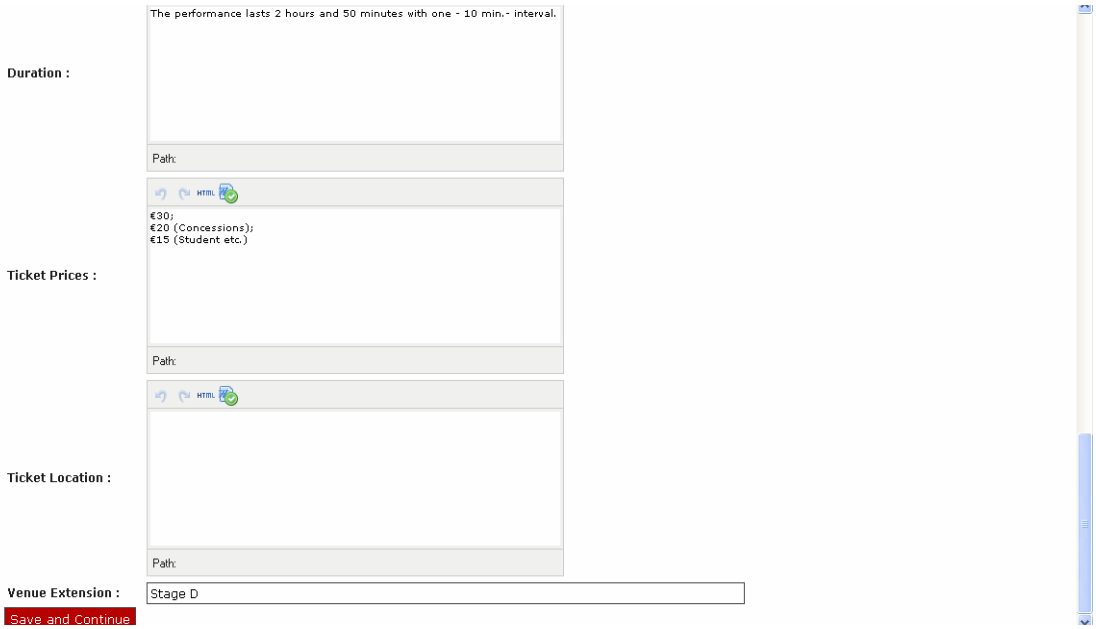
Uploading and testing

The final step is uploading and testing, which takes place progressively at the website Administration forms.

a. firstly, the basic elements, images and texts:


Administration
Administration Home | Events Home | Help
General Description :
The Wooster Group - id 143
Online Booking Enabled:
Ye
Booking Link:
http://buy.tickethour.com/festival-ww/showProductList.htm
Online Booking Start Date:
2008-05-23
Online Booking Start Time:
00:01
Set Default Time
Online Booking End Date:
2008-06-16
Online Booking End Time:
14:00
Set Default Time
Small photo :
2008_143_wooster_small_1.1201611546950.jpg
Insert
Large photo :
2008_143_wooster_large_1.1201611557627.jpg
Insert
SWF file :
Insert
PDF file :
Insert
Venue :
Peiraos 260
Season :
2008
Status :
Δημοσιευμένο
Event Type :
Theater
Event Theme :
(None)
Event Sponsors :
AGET HERACLES
Athina 984
City of Athens
Classical Hotels
COSTOPOULOS FOUNDATION
Deftero programma
ERT
Ethiki Trapeza - Neo logotypo
Ethniki Trapeza
Eurobank
Event Links :
www.thewoostergroup.org
Insert
Remove
Event Dates/Times/Booking Links :
2008-06-14 , 21:00:00,
2008-06-15 , 21:00:00,
2008-06-13 , 21:00:00,
2008-06-16 , 19:00:00,
Insert
Modify
Remove
Event Performances - Artists
Edit Event Performances - Artists
(Max Width: 624px Max Height: 431px Type: JPG)
BOTH MUST APPLY
Image Archive :
2008_143_wooster_2.1201868092377.jpg, © Paula Court
2008_143_wooster_3.1201868127434.jpg, © Paula Court
2008_143_wooster_5.1201868161155.jpg, © Paula Court
2008_143_wooster_1.1201611920054.jpg, Casey Spooner, Scott Shepherd and Daniel Pettrow © Paula C
2008_143_wooster_4.1201868144678.jpg, © Paula Court
2008_143_wooster_6.1201868182228.jpg, © Paula Court
Insert
Modify
Remove
Save and Continue
Find: grec
Next
Previous
Highlight all
Match case
Done

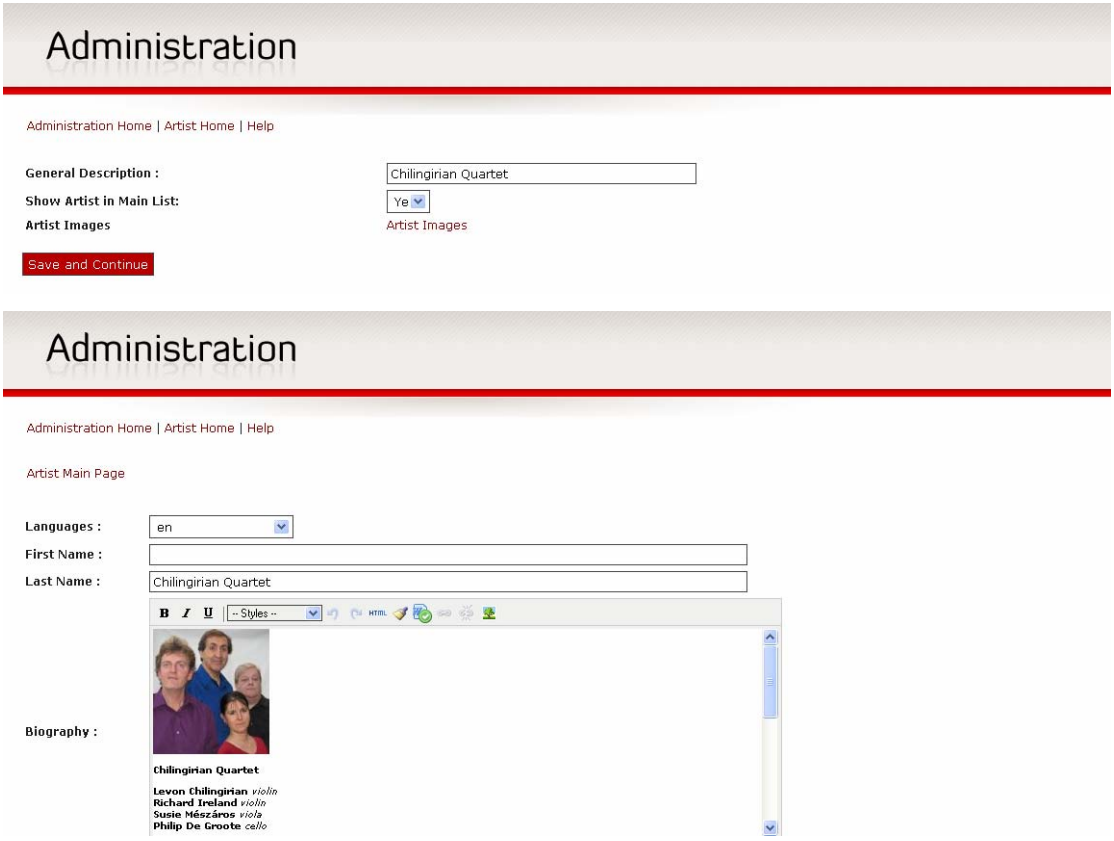

Languages :
en
Title :
The Wooster Group
Path:
Search Title :
The Wooster Group
Path:
Sub Title :
Hamlet
Path:
-- Format --
Directed by Elizabeth LeCompte
Set: Ruud van den Akker
Lighting: Jennifer Tipton, Gabe Maxson
Sound: Geoff Abbas, Joby Emmons, Matt Schloss, Omar Zubair
Video: Reid Farrington
& Andrew Schneider
Costumes: Claudia Hill
Production Manager: Bozkurt Karasu
Assistant to the Director: Teresa Hartmann
Technical Director: Aron Deyo
Fight Coach: Felix Ivanov
Movement Coach: Natalie Thomas
Production Manager: Bozkurt Karasu
.....
Large Descr :
With:
Dominique Bousquet, Roy Faudree, Ari Fliakos, Alessandro Magania, Daniel Pettrow, Scott Shepherd, Casey Spooner, Kate Valk, Judson Williams
The avant-garde New York theatre company returns to the Athens Festival with its famous production of Hamlet.
"Every Hamlet has a book in his hand. But what is today's Hamlet reading?", asks Jan Kott. Hamlet (1601), "contains an erotic tragedy, a tragedy familial, national, philosophical, eschatological and metaphysical", and directors can choose between them at will. There's one proviso, though: "they need to know what they're choosing and why".
The Wooster Group treats Shakespeare's masterpiece as a palimpsest; as such, revisiting the sounds and images of older interpretations through the filter of audio-visual technology, they offer a Hamlet which is "absolutely contemporary, but also utterly faithful to the original". The actors interact with images from the past on on-stage monitors, and our contemporary Prince soliloquizes in tandem with Richard Burton: "to be or not to be?". [D.K.]
In English with Greek surtitles
A Wooster Group / 30th Festival de Barcelona Grec - Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona co-production
Advance booking begins on 23 May.
Path:
Date/Time Descr :
13 - 16 June 2008, 21:00 (13 - 15/6), 19:00 (16/6)
Path:

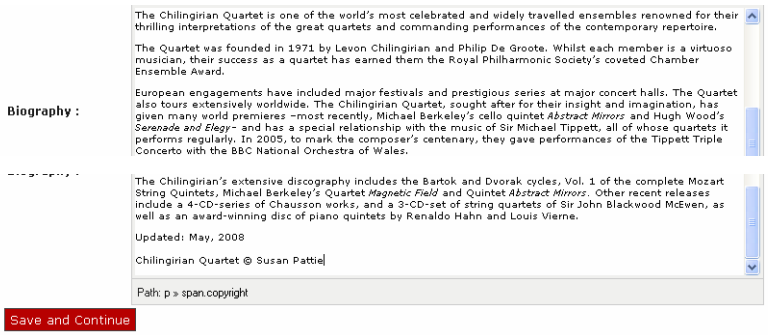


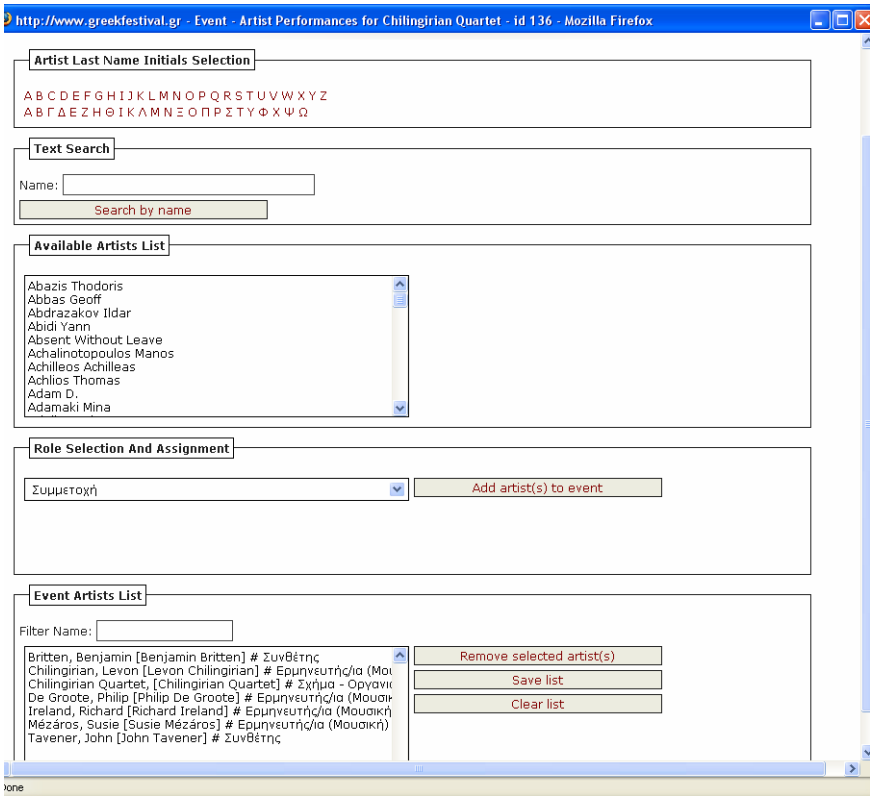
Print screen 15a: *Administration form – part a (billing, text information and images of performances)*

Print screen 15b: *Administration form – part b (billing, text information of performances in English)*

b. secondly, for each performance, the artists, their CVs and their professions:







Print screen 16a: *Administration form (artists in English)*

Print screen 16b: *Administration form (artists related to the performance by their profession)*

c. lastly, any extra information (sponsors etc).

The uploading phase can be realized either when material for *all* performances is completely prepared, or when material concerning *each separate* performance is ready (which is more common in practice): as soon as Documentation and Editing of all components of each performance is complete (basic elements, images, artists, billing info and texts), then material can be uploaded to the website, before stepping in a new performance.

Lastly, having uploaded the content to the client site the material is checked, in order to fix bugs and correct mistakes not noticed earlier. Thereafter, checking and updating content should be a regular and ongoing process that refers to more than just data archiving: it should include 'care for the data' from the moment of its creation onwards (Doorn Peter and Tjalsma Heiko, 2007).

However, all of the above procedures are crucially affected by certain external factors (below).

COMMENTS

Having in mind that:

a. each season contains approximately 80-110 performances, 650 images and 1500 artists;
b. while each season's programme schedule is announced by the end of January, several changes occur (dates, names etc) between January and June, when the Festival kicks off,
c. the website Administrator is the sole person responsible to realize the procedures described above,

the estimated time to curate and upload data for each season is 5 months, plus a further 6 to 7 seven months for archiving (taking into account time for research of printed material and its digitalization).

As a result, the following constraints weigh upon the Hellenic Festival's website management:

a. Content publication of each season is completed only a few weeks before the start of the season (beginning of June).
b. Changes to the artistic programme, which are frequent, necessitate going back-and-forth to the data curation process (e.g. having completed artist information and having progressed to the next phase, we then have to interrupt the process - return to artist information – either to add or alter previously completed information).

c. It is not feasible to expand the content and publish more material (e.g. videos, more biographies) due to lack of time and human resources.
d. Lack of time prevents the Administrator from publishing more than one past season of the Archive per year.
e. Developing the website's administration form, in order to serve internal management purposes (e.g. adding artists' personal contact details to the database) is not realistically achievable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A further investment in manpower – at least two documentalists per season, to add to external associates who will produce more content (e.g. CVs) – will produce a more successful outcome.

Development of the Archive is a vast project on its own and undoubtedly useful, not only for the Festival but also for the wide community of national and international researchers, artists and dedicated visitors. Its development, however, is tightly dependant on the Festival's scarce resources and has to be decided by the Management.

CONCLUSIONS

The curation process of the Hellenic Festival's website, as it has been explored in this paper, is a project that requires a persistent and methodological approach. It contains different stages, from the collection of digital and non-digital material, to its documentation and its uploading and testing. Despite difficulties in the process, some of which are dependant on financial constraints – a very typical characteristic of arts organizations – as well as the complexity of data, nevertheless the importance of the project is evident, providing information to visitors, researchers and the Festival's employees and contributing to the world wide expansion of cultural information. Thus, we hope that the significant work that has been done so far will provide a basis for discussion regarding its expansion and proper content maintenance.

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