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An Interview with Stefan Ide

DGK Chair ■ SOMA Festival Organizer

— ***A festival for body psychotherapy sounds exciting and completely new! Can you explain what this festival is and how it differs from the conferences and congresses we know?***

The Body Psychotherapy Festival SOMA aims to create a vibrant and inclusive space, uniting individuals from the fields of body psychotherapy and bodywork. Whether through training groups or professional identities, attendees will have the opportunity to connect, network, and share ideas and experiences across the diverse spectrum of psychotherapeutic and therapeutic methods. The festival emphasizes experience, featuring a select number of specialist lectures by leading figures in the field; however, the primary focus is on numerous experiential workshops designed to foster new opportunities for all participants. Our goal is to cultivate a festival of encounters, vitality, and joy.

— ***How did you come up with this idea? When and what inspired you to organize a festival?***

The idea first emerged three years ago during a meeting of the National Council of the European Association for Body Psychotherapy (EABP). My colleague Marc Rackelmann and I attended this meeting for the first time as delegates of the German National Association DGK, and we had plenty of time to brainstorm ideas and discuss the changes we wanted to see in our association. The National Council meeting took place in beautiful weather in Greece. We even went to the beach together, and while swimming in the sea, we realized that previous formats, such as conferences or congresses for body psychotherapy, could perhaps be revised and further developed. We hoped to find approaches that might appeal more to younger colleagues. That's how we conceived the idea of organizing SOMA.

- ***What lies at the heart of the festival? What kind of atmosphere or experience do you envision for participants upon their arrival?***

The SOMA Festival creates opportunities for body psychotherapists, practitioners, researchers, students, and enthusiasts to gather in a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging and connection within the body-psychotherapy community, facilitates networking and collaboration, promotes the exchange of ideas, and, most importantly, encourages the younger generation of body psychotherapists.

- ***Could you provide some insight into what attendees can expect – what types of workshops, activities, or moments will make this festival special?***

At the core of body psychotherapy is the recognition that emotional and psychological well-being is deeply intertwined with physical health. Our festival emphasizes this integration, offering tools and techniques to harmonize your mind and body, leading to lasting change while also providing spaces and activities for recreation and connection. Each day of the festival is dedicated to a distinct theme:

- **Day 1** Roots and Development of Body Psychotherapy
- **Day 2** The Body as a Crossroads of Cultural Diversity
- **Day 3** Somatic Dimensions of Trauma
- **Day 4** Vitality, Spirituality, and the Body

Each theme is introduced by our keynote speakers and further explored in a variety of engaging workshops. We are honored to feature keynote presentations from Stephen W. Porges, Matthew Appleton, Merete Holm Brandtberg, Maurizio Stupiggia, Alexandra Algafari, Marc Rackelmann, Bettina Schroeter, Kathrin Stauffer and myself, Stefan Ide.

- ***Who do you think will attend the festival? Is it mainly aimed at professionals, or do you hope to reach a wider audience?***

Registration for the festival is open to anyone interested. We hope that the festival will appeal to younger colleagues who are perhaps still in training or at the beginning of their careers as body psychotherapists. Registration opened just before Christmas, and we already have attendees from 12 countries, including the US. SOMA will be conducted entirely in English, and we expect participants from all over Europe and North America.

- ***Body psychotherapy is practiced in many ways around the world. To what extent does this festival reflect or celebrate the diversity of approaches and traditions in our field?***

The festival is dedicated to showcasing the diverse range of body psychotherapy practices. We acknowledge the foundational contributions of Neo-Reichian schools, including bioenergetics, biodynamics, and biosynthesis, which have profoundly influenced the field. Additionally, we aim to highlight various methods such as breathing therapy, concentrative movement therapy, dance therapies, and voice and expression work. By encouraging practitioners from these varied areas to submit their workshop proposals, we strive to create a comprehensive platform that honors and celebrates the multitude of approaches and traditions within body psychotherapy. This inclusive approach ensures that attendees can experience and learn from a broad spectrum of practices, reflecting the global richness of our field.

- ***What do you hope participants will take away from this festival – both personally and professionally?***

Whether you're there to heal, learn, or experience the joy of movement and connection with a vibrant multicultural and international community interested in body psycho-



*Some members of the SOMA team visited the venue in Bad Meinberg in August
Left to right: Marton Szemerey, Saranda Rexha, Marc Rackelmann, Alexander Vachev, Stefan Ide*

therapy, you will leave SOMA with a sense of belonging, a deeper understanding of our profession's significance, and a renewed appreciation for our community and our capacity to connect and grow.

■ ***Creating something so unique must be a challenge. Who are the people behind it and making it happen?***

We have a fantastic international team composed of young and experienced professionals from the field of body psychotherapy. For instance, two young colleagues, Alexandra Algefari and Alexander Vachev, played a vital role in organizing the EABP Congress in Sofia 2023. With great commitment, they now apply all their experience to this project. We also have the support of the President of the EABP, Kathrin Stauffer, and the Secretary of the EABP, Saranda Rexha. Marton Szemerey, the speaker of the EABP Forum (the body psychotherapeutic schools represented in the EABP), is another key supporter. Of course, we also have the backing of representatives from the host organization, the German Association for Body Psychotherapy (DGK): Marc Rackelmann, the second chairman; Bettina Schroeter, another board member; and myself, Stefan Die, in my role as chairman of the DGK. We will also rely on the help of a team of volunteers both before and during the festival.

■ *This is such a new and exciting concept. What would you like to share with the body psychotherapy community to help them prepare for this festival?*

Well, first of all, if they haven't done so already, they definitely need to mark the dates on their calendars and secure their tickets as soon as possible – this is an event you won't want to miss! Staying connected with us through our website and social media is crucial to receive the latest updates and insider information about the festival. We're excited to receive workshop proposals, but we're also open to new ideas for additional activities – especially those that promote cultural exchange and bring people together in fresh and innovative ways.



All roads lead to Bad Meinberg...



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