



# POST-HEIMAT. A WORKING MEETING 25 – 27 MAY 2018 MÜNCHNER KAMMERSPIELE

## ENCOUNTER #1 – REPORT

Many theatre initiatives have been focusing on widening the cultural spectrum of their work whether artistically or structurally by approaching and building up a more diverse audience that can reflect the social demography shifts around them. They are working on opening their teams and implementing inclusive projects with youth and adults from migration and/or refugee backgrounds, LGBTIQ communities, Non-White German artists etc. trying to re-question conventional categories and stereotypes.

In May 2018, the Münchner Kammerspiele invited as part of their Open Border platform, representatives of some of these initiatives, scholars, cultural experts and students to meet up and share their experiences as a starting point in shaping a **network** with long term and efficient exchange. This working meeting was co-organised with RUHRORTER.

The aim of this encounter #1 – Post Heimat was to create a momentum of collective energy and open a path for a collective voice to be heard, to carve a

space for on-going discussions on current needs and trends in regard to diversity in theatre structures (institutions or endeavors), ways of responding to them, differences and common grounds, working conditions and how to ameliorate them etc.

**ENCOUNTER #1** – one of a series to come – looked at the different operational models at work and envisioned how to strengthen the capacity of such initiatives in order to inscribe them within broader theatre policies. The networking between peers (researchers, experts, producers, cultural managers, etc.) has the wish to advocate for a sustainable support for such projects, to mutualize the efforts, for a better visibility and assessment of the impacts, in order to continue and grow.

**ENCOUNTER #1** included 4 main activities:

- A presentation session
- A symposium with scholars and researchers working on the topic of theatre and migration
- An outdoor performance “Miunikh-Damaskus”
- Two closed working sessions

## 1. PRESENTATION

On 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, the participants presented their initiatives and their projects. The idea was to focus on one successful project and to then pinpoint burning issues they are facing in regard to inclusiveness and diversity. The 6 different theatre (groups) initiatives were:

- **boat people projekt** (Göttingen)

[www.boatpeopleprojekt.de](http://www.boatpeopleprojekt.de)

- **HAJUSOM** (Hamburg)

[www.hajusom.de](http://www.hajusom.de)

- **THE EXILE ENSEMBLE** – Maxim Gorki Theatre (Berlin)

<https://gorki.de/en/exile-ensemble>

- **RUHRORTER** (Mülheim)

[www.ruhrorter.com](http://www.ruhrorter.com)

- **COLLECTIVE MA'LOUBA** – Theater a.d. Ruhr (Mülheim)

<https://www.facebook.com/CollectiveMalouba/>

- **OPEN BORDER** – Münchner Kammerspiele

<https://www.muenchner-kammerspiele.de/en/open-border/open-border-ensemble>

Some questions raised:

- How to deal with language on stage?
- How to avoid exoticism, misery porn and labeling when working with people from a migration background?
- How to approach people so they don't feel culturally offended?
- How does the audience receive works with unfamiliar aesthetics?
- How to support the sustainability of process-oriented long term projects?
- How to translate without losing meaning?

Some challenges mentioned:

- Inter-cultural codes
- The language barriers
- Audience reception
- Instrumentalization, frustration, isolation, and disappointment of the people you are working with.
- Censorship when telling a story that is too political
- Cutting funds
- Self-employment
- Rethinking the names of the groups within the changing contexts

*Please find a contact list attached to this report.*

## 2. POST HEIMAT. A SYMPOSIUM

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, a public symposium with scholars and researchers took place in Kammer 3. It included two panels:

*"Witnessing Transitions"* with Christopher Balme, Özlem Canyürek, Julian Warner moderated by Jonas Tinius.



The panelists discussed transitions/ transformations and shared observations about the changing landscape and scholarship on theatre and migration, cultural policies and funding structures as well as research on specific reflections on discrimination. Have new aesthetics emerged (applied theatre, etc.) regarding such projects, and what are their benefits or pitfalls? Do these more recent developments differ from previous eras in which migration played a role in German society? And in what sense do we think theatre develops counter or alternative imaginations to ideas of Heimat and belonging?

*"Possible Futures"* with Ruba Totah, Nora Haakh, Gin Müller moderated by Krystel Khoury.



The panelists raised the question of how can we create narratives that can reflect our realities today in term of diversity and inclusion in order to build up mutual ethical exchange and let spaces of encounters emerge. How can theatre be on a practical level, a tool for such processes to be triggered and what are the social and institutional challenges faced?

*Please find the biographies of the panelists attached to this report.*

### **3. MIUNIKH – DAMASKUS (GESCHICHTEN EINER STADT)**

by Jessica Glause and The Open Border Ensemble

On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> of May, the participants were invited to attend “Miunikh-Damaskus”. This outdoor performance is the first production with the Open Border Ensemble inviting Syrian actors to The Münchner Kammerspiele. A feedback session gathering production and artistic managers involved in the project was organized afterwards with the aim to discuss and analyze with the participants how they perceived such a theatrical work. The concept behind it as well as its production challenges were also shared.



For more information about Miunikh-Damaskus, please check:  
<https://www.muenchner-kammerspiele.de/en/staging/miunikh-damascus>

## 4. WORKING GROUPS

On 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, working groups gathered to brainstorm about two general topics:

### A.) CULTURAL POLICIES / FUNDS

#### Claims - Issues - Needs

- Towards diversity and movement → expanding the scope
- Share more pool resources, know-how, information
- Develop strategic partnerships
- Establishing/ hiring diversity agents → how to change a policy of an institution not only one person.
- Discussing the jury quotas
- Critical debate on Funding projects → BKS for funding the process, training, researchers, how to discuss with them in terms of “diversity programs”
- Expand discussion/ critique of artistic quality/ criteria/ assessments → Artistic work v/s non artistic quality - Which criteria? Critical feedbacks on the conventional artistic criteria of assessment.
- Claim space for Critical Centre for Cultural Policies.

### B.) AESTHETICAL PRACTICE / ARTISTIC APPROACH

#### Emerging topics

Collaboration / Co Production

- How to generate diversity and inclusiveness in artistic projects?

Increasing collaborations and co productions.

Creating teams who define their work in a constellation.

Being aware of the power relationships between the people who are getting the funding and the hosted people engaged in the creative process.

*Translation*

- How to communicate when we don't speak the same language – words and aesthetics?

Translation is not only a tool but also a way to transmit a work and an idea.

The production / funding needs to consider the translator as a necessity, holding a key position in the process. The creative process becomes a laboratory of communication and understanding of concepts that are being brought up and lived differently.

*Time*

Temporality shapes the aesthetics of the projects. In theatre institutions, productions already suffer from short working periods. Teams are under pressure and the work is oriented towards Premieres. The short length time production, becomes even more problematic when the aim through the creative process is to generate the intercultural group's own aesthetics.

### *Canon /Stories*

- How can we find new tools to not reproduce the same stories, ideas and problems? How to trigger a „shift in aesthetics“?
- What canons are we aware of? How can we translate stories that have existed in the canon much earlier? What are the stories of other migrants that are not heard?

What we are mostly witnessing on stage are biographical stories/trauma or specific novels and plays with themes of war, nation, state, racism, migration and ideology. We need to find the common interests to go beyond the labeling and cultural confinement.

### *Audience Development*

- How to think of the audience within such a process? What are the habits of the audience and how to bring in new habits?
- How do a German audience receive such works?
- How to approach the communities opposing the idea of diversity?

### **Suggestions**

- Creative aesthetics need continuity and time. We feel the urge to advocate for longer term artistic collaboration. One can imagine adding an “Anbahnungsphase“/ Building Up Phase – before starting the work in order for the people involved to get familiar with each other. It can be a workshop (2 weeks) or double the time of production. A larger awareness from the cultural sector that these kind of collaborations can not be worked on in only 6 weeks is needed.
- Hold a specific position in the team for an artistic mediator/producer.
- Hold a specific position in the team for a translator. The translator should ideally be an unbiased mediator between director team and actors with knowledge of theater and performance production.  
Both these positions need to be included in the budget applications as vital and necessary position - Central focus of translation and mediation. Last Minute assessment and „crisis“ management is contra productive.
- Develop artistic strategies for language and dealing with translations artistically.
- Search for new stories or old stories or old stories from other world literature, involve literature experts and broader network of intellectuals.

### **Further issues to be discussed in next Encounter #2**

- Sharing a manifesto/ clear policy demands and getting the support of researchers and cultural policy experts to back up the demands
- Audience Development
- Networking Platform / Website
- Connection between the Free groups and the institutions

## **NEXT MEETINGS // ENCOUNTER #2 and #3 (TBC)**

- Mülheim an der Ruhr in Nov-Dec 2018.
- Göttingen/Hannover Feb. 2019

## **BIOGRAPHIES SYMPOSIUM**

**CHRISTOPHER BALME** currently holds the chair in Theatre Studies at the University of Munich. He was born and educated in New Zealand where he graduated from the University of Otago. He has lived and worked in Germany since 1985 with positions at the universities of Würzburg, Munich and Mainz. He held the chair in theatre studies at the University of Amsterdam and was dean of the Faculty of History and Art at the University of Munich. Christopher Balme is past-president of the German Society for Theatre Research and is president of the [IFTR](#) (International Federation for Theatre Research). He was Senior Editor of Theatre Research International and currently edits the journal Forum Modernes Theater. Recent publications include: *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical syncretism and postcolonial drama* (Oxford 1999), *Pacific Performances: Theatricality and Cross-Cultural Encounter in the South Seas* (Palgrave Macmillan 2007) and *Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* (Cambridge 2008). His current research interests focus on the legacy of modernism in the globalization of the arts; theatre and the public sphere; the relationship between media and performance.

**ÖZLEM CANYÜREK** studied sociology at Istanbul University. She completed her MA at Istanbul Bilgi University on cultural management and cultural policy. She worked as a freelance cultural manager until 2014, designing cultural education projects for socially and economically disadvantaged children and youth. She is currently a PhD student at Hildesheim University, Department of Cultural Policy, examining the intercultural opening of the theatre landscape in Germany. Her research is supported by the PhD programme of the Educational Integration Centre (ZBI): Diversity and Democracy in Immigrant Societies. Her research interests include the transformation of cultural spaces, migration, access to and participation in culture.

**NORA HAAKH**, born in Southern Germany in 1985, is a researcher, dramaturg, director and graphic recorder based in Berlin. While studying Middle Eastern Studies, Politics and History in Berlin, Paris, Istanbul and Cairo, she started working in theatre, assisting, among others, theatre artists such as Yael Ronen ("Dritte Generation", Schaubühne), Kai Tuchmann ("10 Stories about war", Goethe Institut Iraq) or Nurkan Erpulat/Jens Hillje ("Crazy Blood", Ballhaus Naunynstraße). From 2012 to 2015 she worked as a dramaturg at Berlin's postmigrant theatre Ballhaus Naunynstraße mainly on New Writing, devised plays, documentary theatre and international festivals. As a director herself, she has staged texts by Mohammad Al-Attar and Wasim Ghrioui. Nora Haakh is currently pursuing a PhD on Arabic Theatre on the way to and in Germany at BGS MCS, Freie Universität Berlin.

**KRYSTEL KHOURY**, born in Beirut in 1983, is a cultural manager and anthropologist. Trained first as a dancer, she majored in performing arts theories and holds a PhD degree in Anthropology of dance and intercultural dynamics (Auvergne University,

France). Since 2006, Krystel is actively involved in implementing cultural initiatives and facilitating local as well as transnational creative projects connecting artists from both Mediterranean shores. She is a board member of the Arab Theatre Training Centre (Lebanon) and a performing arts expert for the Roberto Cimetta Fund (France). Since 2017, she has been the artistic director of the Open Border Ensemble at Münchner Kammerspiele.

**GIN MÜLLER** lives mainly in Vienna and partly in Mexico City. Gin works as a dramaturg, performer, lecturer and activist. Since 2004 Gin teaches at the University of Vienna (theatre/film/media- studies). From 2017 – 2019 he\* is Guest Prof. at the Academy of Fine Arts (Contextual Painting). Gin works for the Transgender/Queer Counselling in Rosa Lila Villa (Vienna) and Queer Base (Welcome and Support for LGBTIQ Refugees) and was/is active in the Refugee Protest Collective, the Refugee Konvoi and the Votivchurch Occupation in Vienna. He\* was part of the activist collective PublixTheatreCaravan - noborderlab, and the queer Performance Band SV Damenkraft. Recent Theatre/Performance/-Productions (together with Verein zur Förderung der Bewegungsfreiheit): *FANTOMAS MONSTER 1+2* (2016/17 brut\_Vienna, Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City), *Trans Gender Moves* (Vienna, Salzburg 2014/15), *Melodrom – The Making of a rebellious Telenovela* (Mexico City, brut Wien, 2012/13). Recent Publications: *Possen des Performativen, Theater, Aktivismus und queere Politiken* (Wien 2008)

**JONAS TINIUS** is an anthropologist of art and post-doctoral research fellow at the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage (CARMAH), based at the Institute of European Ethnology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany. For his doctoral research (Cambridge, 2016) he conducted an ethnography of theatre, focusing on the Theater an der Ruhr and its international work, but also looking at rehearsals, institutional logics, and authority. As part of this work, he also accompanied the RUHRORTER group and wrote extensively on their critical practice. His current research explores how Berlin-based curators, contemporary artists, and art institutions engage with notions of alterity and otherness through critical curatorial strategies to reflect on German and European heritage and identities. He is convener of the Anthropology and the Arts Network of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (with Roger Sansi, Barcelona). [www.jonastinius.com](http://www.jonastinius.com)

**RUBA TOTAH** studied English Literature and Translation at Birzeit University. From 2008-2013 she did her Masters on Gender and Development at Birzeit University (Topic: Performing Arts and Social Change under Colonialism in Palestine during the period 1960-2012; View on Impact of Religiosity and Class on Gender Relations in Performing Arts). From 2007-2015 she worked as a program manager at Tamer Institute for Community Education in Palestine. Since October 2017 she has been a PhD student at the graduate school "Transnational Social Support" at Johannes Gutenberg – University Mainz. Her research asks the question of how Syrian performing artists do experience refuge in Europe. It perceives live stories of artists in the period prior and after moving in Europe, aiming to realize new meaning about their motivations.

**JULIAN WARNER** is a research assistant and lecturer at the Department for Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology at the University of Göttingen (Germany). His research focusses on Black European Studies, Racism and Pop Culture. He is also part of the artistic-research group HAUPTAKTION.



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