



Theatre project with UAMs addressing questions of identity, flight and growing up in a world of diversity

(November 2012- November 2015)

CJD Hamburg + Eutin

'Gott und die Welt und ich' – 'God and the World and Me'

This is the title of a three year cooperative project between the CJD Hamburg + Eutin and the Thalia theatre, one of Hamburg's most renowned theatres. The project started in November 2012 and brings together unaccompanied young refugees and youths with a migration background on stage. The project aims to raise awareness of the diversity in the city and the hardship and the life paths of young refugees coming to Hamburg. The project is financed by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and by the Department of Culture of the City of Hamburg.

A young woman from Afghanistan states: "I have never been to a theatre in my life but I want to give it a try". The theatre project aims to give a voice to unaccompanied young refugees and wants to give them the opportunity of exchange with other young people. During the three year project, various theatre performances will emerge based on the interviews and improvisations by the youth. These performances will be integrated into the programme of the Thalia theatre.

The young participants are attending languages schools in Hamburg and have been clients of CJD social and educational counselling services. Most of them are refugees from regions of conflict such as Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq; some are from Latin America, Africa and Europe. All of them have only recently arrived in Germany.

Many of the young people have experienced incredible hardship. The theatre project allows them to elevate some of the burden by transforming their experiences into dance and performance and by giving voice to what could not be said otherwise. According to the head of the project Kirsten Sass, the project aims to look at the "cultural past" and the "cultural now" and encourages them to "deal with one's identity". In addition, the young people



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should be inspired to look at common themes in their lives beyond all the obvious differences. Because ultimately they are all young, and curious about life.

The Thalia theatre provides professional support: Anton Krause, assistant director of the theatre has worked with young people for many years. „Of course, it is quite a new experience to have to go without language in the initial working stages. But performing in theatre require other means of expression anyways. It is a fun experience to observe how the courage and trust of the group is gradually growing.”

So far, the young people have performed on six occasions in the theatre at schools and at cultural centres, which have revealed an insight into their search for the “gate to the world”. This gate is not easily opened, neither to the outside nor to the inside, but the young people are pursuing their search by asking: "Who do I want to be?", "Who or what is cool?", "Who am I with my friends?", "What remains when I am alone?", "How do I find love or how does love find me?", "Where does life take me?", "What does 'home' mean to me?", "Can I open doors when I am without language and unable to understand?". The young people have the courage to approach their inner selves behind the gate and to question and explore this element of themselves.

To find out more about this project and to see the theatre group in action please visit this link: <http://youtu.be/brYKLGj-jow>

(in German.)



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