Article Christian Bos in the Kölner Stadtanzeiger

**Europe as a question of faith**

Director Andre Erlen starts the Sommerblut-Project „Face to Faith“

Sometimes it is only faith that helps. For example, if you want to get through the year 2020 being a theater creator.

On the other hand it is a misbelief that nothing is happening just because stages are dusting.

Andre Erlen, director and manager of the cologne theater group „Futur3“, would have spent this week in Italy, Modena, on the kick-off-conference of a huge project that he initiated on behalf of Sommerblut Festival.

Now, it is taking place via zoom. Main thing is, it goes on.

Faith and taboo.

Together with six theaters, groups and festivals from Finland, Israel, Poland, Italy, the Ukraine and Czech Republic Erlen plans a collaboration, ongoing for two years with the title „Face to Faith“.

Exactly: it is about faith, the individual and the collective, and about religion.

Some years back Erlen already curated a european project about taboo for Sommerblut-Festival.

The topic „faith“ is now so to speak the other side.

Also there is incredibly much in motion: From the mixing between religion and politics down to conspiracy theories. Finally they are their own belief systems.

Among other things it is about the question where the moral and ethic instances are in our society.

How can faith be meaningful and identity forming and is it in.- or excluding?

„Very consciously we chose partners we hadn’t ever worked with“ Erlen tells. In countries were faith has very different meanings.

In Poland for instance the politicazion of the catholic church is the big topic, it pushes in many live events, universities, schools, the arts.

For most of the Finnish people faith is only interesting away from organized religion.

„In the ukraine again religion is part of the national identity. There, the orthodoxe church has just reached its independence from the moscow patriarchate.“

And in Israel?

„There is nothing, that isn’t at the same time religious and political.“

The title under which the request had been handed in was: „Faith in Crisis“.

„Our partners in Tel Aviv told us, if they would poster the words „Faith in Crisis“ on their theater, that would immediately be held as a provocation.

Not only the mentality but also the participating theaters couldn’t be more different.

„The Warsaw Theater Powszechny is an incredible innovativ theater, to be compared with the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin.

The Gesher Theater in Israel again is a private theater with 800 seats, therefore they play a much more audience oriented theater.

The festival in Finnland, Kuipo, mostly performance-art and participation doesn’t even take place in a theater space, but on the street or in a bank branch.

And the colleagues from the Teatro dei Venti in Modena?

They are socially committed to street theater with prisoners.

So first of all, one has to get together now.

When basic questions are being answered, they’ll be followed by open calls for individual projects.

In April - if corona allows them - the partners will come together in Lemberg.

The meetings will be flanked by three public conferences.

The actual productions will have their premiers in spring 2022 in the partner town and then in the other countries.

Just now, were more and more countries withdraw to national aspects, Erlen is hoping to get answers to the question, that more or less moves the whole European Union:

„How can one create a joint European public, how to think of us again as a union?

Or, a bit more modest: „How can we, as theater people simulate this unity at least for a certain time?“