

ECHT!

7. FESTIVAL
POLITIK IM FREIEN THEATER
13.- 23. NOVEMBER 2008 // KÖLN
www.bpb.de/politikimfreientheater



demokratie
leben

Landeszentrale
für politische Bildung
Nordrhein-Westfalen



Press release

14 November, 2008

ECHT! – Festival begins on a furious note with "Hell on Earth"

"When I grow up I want to travel – to Argentina, Brazil or Lebanon. I've never been there." That wish was expressed by a boy whose parents came to Germany from Lebanon. In Cologne's packed Schauspielhaus theatre, the opening performance at the 7th "Politik im Freien Theater" festival hit the stage yesterday. Constanza Macras and her ensemble Dorky Park brought young people from Berlin's "problem" district Neukölln on stage for the dance piece "Hell on Earth". At a breakneck pace, but also with plenty of humour, the kids talked about their problems of growing up, and gave the performance everything they had. The roller-coaster musical-dance performance set the pace for the coming ten days of the festival.

"This festival is not a normal festival," said Thomas Krüger, the President of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb), in his opening remarks. "For more than 20 years now, the bpb has been providing impulses for a lively political debate with it." With crisis and upheaval the order of the day, said the head of Cologne's Office for Cultural Affairs Konrad Schmidt-Werthern, "now is the time for political theatre!"

Along with German-language and international guest performances, including five world premieres in the "Made in Köln" series, the 7th "Politik im Freien Theater" festival is presenting an elaborate cultural programme. The "Untergrund in der Maastrichter", a domed cellar in an old building on the city's Maastrichter Street, has been converted into a venue for the event. During the day, visitors here can view Hofmann & Lindholm's video installation "Serie Deutschland – Etappe Köln/Bonn" (Germany Series – the Cologne/Bonn Stage), while from 10:00 p.m. onwards, they can check out the Festival's late night programme. There are also podium discussions on selected plays. Author Monika Rinck ("Ah, das Love-Ding!") will take part in one round looking at a new feminism moderated by member-of-the-jury Tina Mendelsohn (*Kulturzeit*). Journalist Isabel Schayani (*Monitor*) is heading another evening forum examining the topic of "Exile". Among the other exciting events is a reading from a cheap political paperback as well as a 'Performance out of Africa'. The festival will also be heading aboveground for another event. On Monday the 17th of November, representative figures from the arts and the sciences – including film-maker Romuald Karmaker (*The Himmler Project*) – will meet in the parish hall at Moltkestrasse 119 to discuss artistic representation and the Holocaust. On Fridays and Saturdays during the festival, DJs in the cellar of the Café Hallmackenreuther will help visitors unwind from their day at the festival.

After collecting more than 1,500 Cologne wishes in the last two months, the group Drama Köln yesterday opened their action "Büro für lauter Kölner Wünsche" (Nothing BUT Cologne Wishes) in Bismarckstrasse 44. This is where Penny, Alb, Pax and Demut plan how to voice the wishes, and send them along on the next stage of their journey, make a 'city map of wishes', publish the wishes in the newspaper, or make contact with the wishers. Sometimes they leave the office to bring the wishes back to the city. They also hold speeches in public places, invite people to take part in rituals, or occupy unsuspecting PA systems.

Pressekontakt Festival:

Ursula Teich | Public Relations
i. A. der bpb
Im Dau 6, 50678 Köln
Tel +49 (0)221 5890708
Fax +49 (0)221 5890709
Mobil +49 (0)173 5204894
presse@ursulateich.de
www.bpb.de/politikimfreientheater

Informationen:

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
Festivalleitung
Milena Mushak
Adenauerallee 86
53113 Bonn
Tel +49 (0) 228-99515518
Milena.mushak@bpb.de
www.bpb.de

Pressekontakt bpb:

Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
Raul Gersson
Adenauerallee 86
53113 Bonn
Tel +49 (0)228-99 515-284
Fax +49 (0)228-99 515-293
presse@bpb.de
www.bpb.de/presse

For more information, head for: www.bpb.de/politikimfreientheater

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