

## **Zeit heilt alle Stunden [Time heals all hours]**

Collage by Sigrun Fritsch  
with

rap texts by Robin Haefs  
and

text excerpts from Bert Brecht's "Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny" [Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny], Richard Schuberth's Mediterranean grotesque "FRONTEX - Keiner kommt hier lebend rein" [FRONTEX - No one enters here alive] and Pablo Neruda's "Residencia en la Tierra" [A Stay on Earth].

### **Location:**

Three stages: Present-day metropolis - Mahagonny, land of shadows  
below the city - a world far removed from the light

Characters:

Swantje van Ecken: Reporter for Arte brisant

Sergio: Camera man

Three groups of young people:

Group 1: Young refugees

Group 2: Young people, in part recently landed refugees

Group 3: Girls

Lizard

### **Plot:**

In 2013 Swantje van Ecken, reporter for ARTE brisant, conducts a group of young people across the Mediterranean as they flee death and persecution in their homeland to the Freiburg inner-city migration reception centre (Stage 1). In response to initial questions as to how they are doing, the refugees do not mention their dire situation, but rather repeat statements uttered by citizens and the authorities responsible for the reception of refugees upon their arrival: No permanent residence - numbers of refugees snowball - fleeing and shirking responsibilities to rebuild their homeland - threatening increase in social problems wherever they seek refuge...!

In this situation, shortly after their arrival, the asylum seekers together with the reporter and Sergio the camera man are forced by another group of young people to the world under the city, to Mahagonny (Stage 2).

There they bear witness to re-enacted scenes of other asylum seekers' experiences which occurred only a few months before in the very place where the newcomers are now looking to settle. As Swantje and Sergio, the two journalists, penetrate even deeper into the underworld (Stage 3), they find themselves in a nightmare in which a horde of foreign invaders resembling dehumanised beasts destroy the civilisation they happen upon, tear apart the system of ethics and feed on the citizens.

Swantje and Sergio finally awaken from this horrible dream of civilian fear and return (via Stage 2) to the light (to Stage 1). There they consciously reassure themselves that they are neither active decision-makers in emigration policy nor affected stakeholders seeking protection; instead they sit on the stage "in words".

The young people demand the here and now and know that silence must not be allowed to prohibit speech; instead spoken language must prevail over silence and destruction: For they are people!

The process of this confrontation with the foreign is accompanied by the lizard, which survives all ages and which experiences and interprets mankind in its ever recurring primal fears and atrocities.

### **The piece:**

In the collage *Zeit heilt alle Stunden* [Time heals all hours] the audience is introduced to the often hopeless situation faced by refugees and asylum seekers. Traumatized by terror and poverty in their homeland, they have undertaken a dangerous flight to find inclusion in a better, more peaceful world. They reach the major centres of our world and are again faced with the degrading question of what their life, their dignity, is even worth in the society in which they seek safety and in which they wish to participate.

The complex issue of the example of young refugees in and under a "monster" city is depicted in 21 scenes on three different levels. Six raps, written by Robin Haefs, become the corresponding point of flight in the individual scene constructs.

Mahagonny, Bertolt Brecht's promising haven for the discontent of all continents, turns into a caricature of human primal fear of the foreign and the resulting outgrowths in asylum law in Sigrun Fritsch's multifaceted collage "*Zeit heilt alle Stunden*" [Time heals all hours]. But while Brecht's opera text describes the discontent who flee their cities because of weariness and ultimately experience a living hell in their chosen paradise of Mahagonny, this piece shows the exiled, the young, who flee physical and mental duress to seek asylum in a civilised, well-fed society. Upon their arrival, in this piece they experience a world seemingly drained of humanity, a world which has transformed into hell as a result of a deeply engrained persecution complex, and is thus hell for those seeking protection. In this piece those begging reception become a threat to a life of security, a nightmare whose fermenting power triggers fantasies of a mauling pack in the subconscious of the "host country".

The young people are a group of refugees who on the one hand, traumatized by their experiences, seek asylum and who at the same time are disillusioned by the experiences of the other young people. The second group has already gone through the painful transition between displacement and arrival, between hope for a better world and disappointment. Their illusions have yielded to bitterness at the grotesque countenance of humanity. There are also locals among them who are disappointed at the way the generation of adults treats people.

Rap provides the young people with a means of expressing their self-awareness and world view. No other form could serve to better reflect their emotional state of being segregated and lack of prospects: their uprooting and displacement, their awareness of a mosaic-like existence, put together out of shards of various cultures, different social structures and their own unique ideas of life and love. Using the poetic language of high-density narrative fragments, they spotlight issues such as the bleak side of the moloch "city", the social nightmare of the foreign, the cycle of grief and anger, the feeling of somewhere and nowhere, and the constant consolation of light-emitting constellations in the dark firmament.

The two journalists, the reporter Swantje van Ecken and the camera man Sergio, are reminiscent of the officials in Richard Schuberth's Mediterranean grotesque *FRONTEX - KEINER KOMMT HIER LEBEND REIN* [FRONTEX - NO ONE ENTERS HERE ALIVE]. However, in this piece they are shown free of any cliché-ridden attitudes in order to make the real asylum issue tangible and not detract from the volatile explosiveness of the issue with polemic criticism. Their rather unemotional style of reporting is accompanied by neither genre-related cynicism nor effect-begging actionism. Initially regarding the asylum seekers with great scepticism, the two journalists find out more and more about their poverty. It isn't until they are led to the underworld that they can show their shock as human beings and also know what they must do with the words they are sitting in.

The knowledge of this life resides in the lizard. It floats between the worlds - in the chambers which register and administer suffering, in the dungeon of fearful fantasies far removed from the light and in the experiences of time and eternity. In this piece it alone notices God when he comes to Mahagonny one grey morning, although he can no longer be felt by asylum seekers in the dark world of the foreign. In Brecht's Mahagonny text, in contrast, the haven seekers know about God and they admit to themselves "right in the middle of the whisky" that his biblical hell can hold no terrors for them: "You can't drag us to hell by the hair because we have always been in hell" (Scene 21). The lizard, who is

aware of the vicissitudes of life - not least of all from its own experiences - allows for a ray of hope to enter even in this hopeless situation; in the western walls of Freiburg it is an officially protected creature, hailing from the Mediterranean, seeking a new homeland, and is now protected by conservation law.

Hope ultimately comes to the young people too; the golden hieroglyphics of the constellations remain with their eternal light.

September 2014