

Open Letter to:
the Mayor and senator for cultural affairs of Berlin,
the District Mayor of Berlin Mitte,
the spokesmen for cultural policy of the parliamentary groups

March 18th, 2008

Concerning the planned closing of Theatrehouse Mitte at Koppenplatz 12

Dear Mr. Wowereit,

Dear Dr. Hanke,

Dear spokesmen for cultural policy of the parliamentary groups,

„Be Berlin!“ is the new slogan of the capital city. Be creative, be young, be experimental, be different! The Berlin imperative wants to be understood exactly like that and is supposed to be put into practice, but can one be “Berlin”, when “Berlin” does not exist anymore? The Theatrehouse Mitte – founded in 1992, since 2000 a cooperation project of the district office Mitte and the association “Foerderband e.V. / Kulturinitiative Berlin” – is a unique production site of performing arts. 500 artists and groups develop in more than 35.000 hours per year on seven days a week more than 300 performances shown worldwide.

In January 2008 the district office Mitte announced to end the cooperation contract for the Theatrehouse Mitte in June 2008. A primary school should move into the building at Koppenplatz, in the first instance a branch with two classes. As long as there is no stand-alone school established, there is supposed to be a parallel use of the Theatrehouse and school, plans for a long-term preservation of the institution do not exist. This circumstance is the same as a slow death for the Theatrehouse. Theatre in Germany experiences a strong change towards a many-sided, aesthetically differentiated theatre scene. The fixed structures of the state- and city theatres open up towards the creative potential. No matter, if by their own choice or not – freelance artists depend on alternative, affordable production sites. The Theatrehouse Mitte is a reliable partner at this. In its vacancy for rehearsal free theatre productions are formed, which are extremely successful at other performing spaces, for instance at Hebbel am Ufer, Sophiensaele, Vagantenbühne, Admiralspalast.

The institution is a place of cultural encounter. No matter, if Japan, Iraq, Poland or South America, the established festivals of the Theatrehouse Mitte are an important mediator of cultural exchange, not least because it is located in the centre of the capital. Who thinks, that producing theatre is possible everywhere, is wrong. The mentioned cultural services are the basis for the following claim:

- The building at Koppenplatz must remain the home of the cultural institution Theatrehouse Mitte in the future.
- The district office Mitte should enter into a new contract, that ensures a long-term protection of the Theatrehouse Mitte.

“Be Berlin”: The Theatrehouse Mitte is Berlin. It is creative, it is young, it is experimental, it is different! That means that also Berlin has to be Berlin and must not evade its political and financial responsibility for the Theatrehouse Mitte. The Theatrehouse Mitte is for 2000 actors, dancers, directors, singers, film makers, visual artists an important production site securing their livelihoods. The loss of this institution would have fatal consequences. Already it is due to the lack of information about the Theatrehouse that a reliable theatre production is no longer guaranteed.

The capital city has elected itself as the cultural capital of Germany. With reason! The close-down of a successful cultural institution like the Theatrehouse Mitte would be a loss not to be compensated. Berlin is biting the hand that feeds it.

With kind regards

Stefan Behr, Theaterregisseur

Pohlstr. 41, 10785 Berlin, Tel 030-26395999

Email: stefan-behr@t-online.de

List of initial signers:

Dr. Haytham A. Ali, Director, lecturer of University of the Arts, Bagdad, Iraq

Heike Albrecht, artistic director, Sophiensaele

Uwe Bernhard, photographer

Folke Braband, director, Vagantenbühne

Matthias Büdinger, author, actor

Toni Casablanca Egido, actor and director, Casablanca Film

Klaus Chatten, playwright, actor, director

Charly Diehl, director

Nico Dietrich, director

Ulrike Düregger, actress, singer

Michael Gitter, director, drama teacher, Winternachtstraum e.V.

Joanne Gläsel, actress

Matthias Horn, producer Orphtheater

Christian Kahrman, actor, producer

Tilman Kannegießer, Kinder machen Oper e.V.

Pano Karas, actor

Sybille Kolbe, actress, Theater ANU

Irina Kowallik, director, drama teacher

Vicente Larranaga, composer, conductor, Opernkompanie Novoflot

Ulrike Lenz, drama teacher, Süddthüringisches Staatstheater Meiningen

Matthias Lilienthal, artistic director, HAU

Birger Marcuse, actor, director, drama teacher, theaterinmitte

Dietrich Karl Marks, set designer

Christine Marx, actress sinn&ton, Musiktheater für Kinder
Dr. Aqeel Mahdi, author, dean of the University of the Arts, Bagdad, Iraq
Kerstin Müller, commercial manager, Sophiensaele
Michael Neumann, actor
Klaus Nothnagel, author, actor, musician, Hörspiele zum Zugucken
Alexander Opitz First chairman of the federal association of free theatres, manager of the state
association of free theatres in Baden- Wuerttemberg
Benno Plassmann actor, director, art administrator
Rosa von Praunheim, film maker
Tom Presting, set designer
Claudia Prietzel, director
Maik Reif, actor, drama teacher
Kai Schubert Autor, director
Katharina Schüttler, actress
Eckart Seilacher, dramaturg, Orphtheater
Ahmed Shah, director, drama teacher, Theater Grenzen-Los
Kaval Sidqi, actress, teacher at the University of the Arts Dohok, Iraq
Particio Soto, actor, director
Birgit Stauber, director, actress
Elke Strohmeier-Ewert, Kinder machen Oper e.V.
Imre Thormann, choreographer
Eva-Karen Tittmann, producer
Mauricio Veloso, actor, director