

How to Transfer the “Miracle of San Miniato” into a Hamburg Curriculum?

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The Hamburg Theatre Academy is profoundly changing and rebuilding the directing and the acting curricula. For the last two years the Erasmus + Project has given us a lot of wonderful new impulses und inspiration to rethink our artistic education.

At the beginning the term “artistic entrepreneurship” was alien to us. For German artists it sounds like self-marketing, capitalistic and commercial competition.

German theatre is based on a century-old canon of dramatic literature. We have an impressive tradition of philosophy. And since Goethe and the era of “storm and stress” the concept of the ingenious creator is engraved on the German mind.

The German theatre and orchestra landscape is essentially determined by the 140 publicly funded theatres, i.e. municipal theatres, state theatres and communal theatres. In addition there are about 220 private theatres, about 130 opera houses, symphony and chamber orchestras, about 70 festivals, about 150 independent theatre companies and venues without a permanent ensemble and around 100 tour and guest performance stages without a permanent stage or home base

Nearly 100% of the graduates of our acting classes get a two-year-contract in a publicly funded theatre. Many of our directing students start a career in the state theatres.

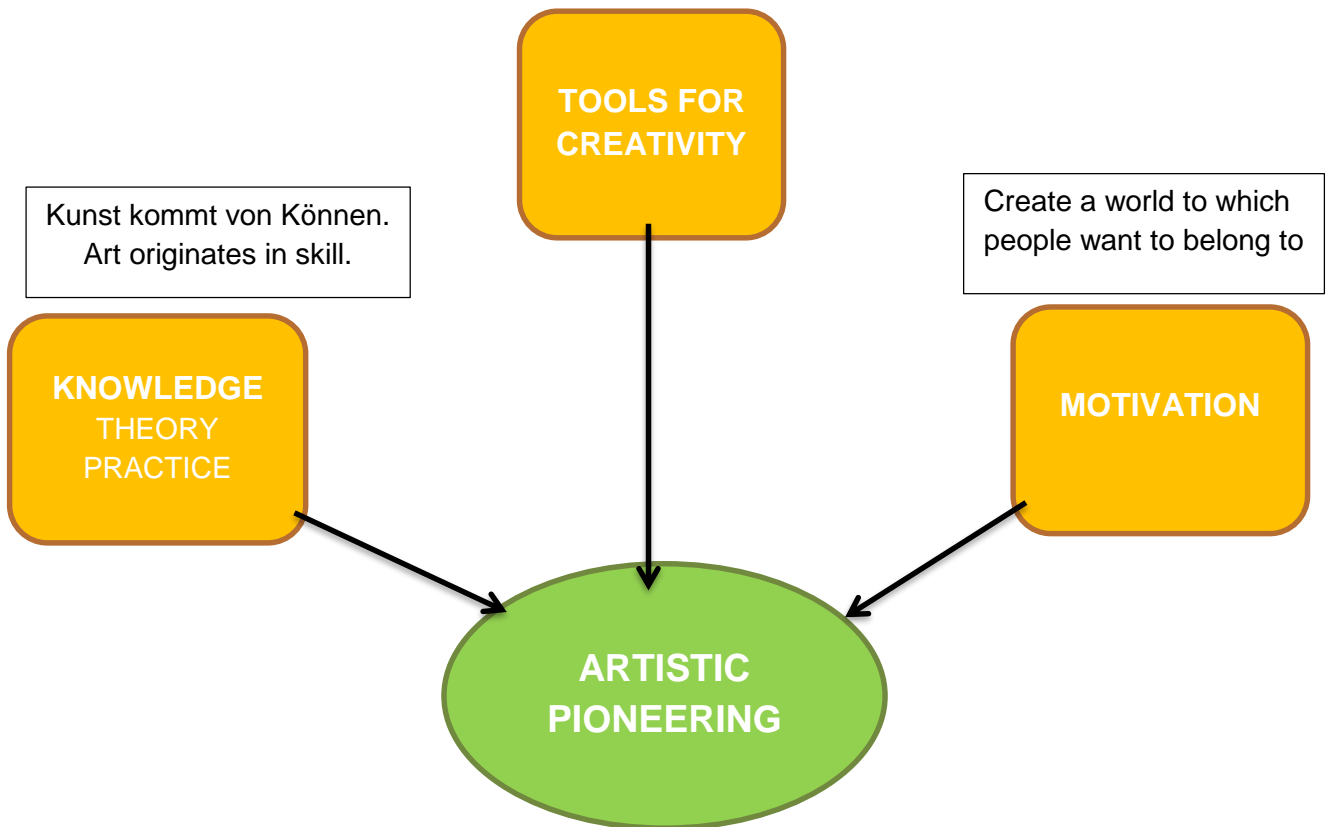
But this cultural paradise shows open cracks. The state subsidies haven't rise since years; the hierarchy is a relic from the 18th century. The audience consists mainly of wealthy and educated citizens and doesn't represent society as a whole. The number of women in leading positions is stuck, since long, at only 22%.

It is time for a revolution and we as a school have the responsibility to enable the students to move forward to a new era of equality, sustainability and democracy.

In the 21st century humanity faces some of its most daunting challenges. Our best resource is to cultivate our abilities of imagination, creativity and innovation. Our greatest peril would be to face the future without investing fully in those abilities. Doing so has to become one of the principal priorities of education and training everywhere. Education is the key to the future, and the stakes could hardly be higher. In 1934, the great Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget said, “only education is capable of saving our societies from possible collapse, whether violent or gradual”. (Ken Robinson, Out of Our Mind)

The German theatre education has to find the balance between the esteem of the remarkable cultural heritage and the freedom to pioneer a new age of politically and socially relevant theatre-art.

Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler did not solve an old problem:
they asked a new question ...



Inspired by Teresa Amabile's model of three components of creativity

Art originates in skill

The European theatre education is based more or less on the tradition of Stanislavsky and the many variations of his theory. As Katie Mitchell points out in her book "The Director's Craft" it needs a basic-knowledge and competences in researching inspiring information, analyzing scenes, communicating with actors and artistic or technical teams. It also needs a historical consciousness of aesthetics, history of art, politics and sociology.

The new point in our reform will be to offer the students a toolbox containing project-management, failure-management, leading in complexity, ideas of how to pitch, etc. right from the beginning of their first term.

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All education must lead to thinking for oneself, deciding for oneself, acting in one's own responsibility and living self-determinedly. (Wolf Lotter, Innovation - pamphlet for barrier-free thinking)

The Hamburg education has always included personal development. The opportunity to try oneself out in many projects, to face the tough conditions under which they have to find their teams, to accept the confrontation with their fellow students develops a critical way of thinking.

But the generation Z is different. They are used to learn in strict structures, they quasi live online ...

Generation Z is the first generation to be raised in the era of smartphones. Many do not remember the time before social media. "We are the first true digital natives," said Hannah Payne, an 18year old U.C.L.A. student and lifestyle blogger. "I can almost simultaneously create a document, edit it, post a photo on Instagram and talk on the phone, all from the userfriendly interface of my iPhone. Generation Z takes in information instantaneously," she said, "and loses interest just as fast." (<https://blogs.vsb.bc.ca/sjames/files/2012/10/Move-Over-Millennials-Here-Comes-Generation-Z-The-New-York-Times.pdf>, 22.9.19)

They need a special training in concentration, awareness of the ability to discover the real environment, listening to their deeper consciousness (?).

"I definitely think growing up in a time of hardship, global conflict and economic troubles has affected my future," said Seimi Park, a 17yearold highschool senior in Virginia Beach, who always dreamed of a career in fashion, but has recently shifted her sights to law, because it seems safer. "This applies to all my friends," she said. "I think I can speak for my generation when I say that our optimism has long ago been replaced with pragmatism."

The author of this article sees an analogy to the so-called "Silent Generation", children of the late 1920ies, who were shaped by war and the Depression and grew up to be the diligent, get along careerists of the '50s and '60s (...) They got married early, had kids early. Their first question in job interviews was about pension plans.

We have to give them the trust to take risk, we have to push them to think radical out of the box. We have to make them feel free for humour and empathy, to make them sensible for resonance in the sense that Hartmut Rosa stands for. We have to teach them patience and endurance.

Create a world to which people want to belong to

Of course we test the intrinsic motivation of the aspirants. We accept 1% of the acting candidates and less than 10 % of the directing candidates. They all burn for their idea of theatre.

The school has to take responsibility for the extrinsic motivation. There were a lot of elements which made the stay in San Miniato such a success and we can transfer them to our school: profit from different, transdisciplinary programs like sound-design and play-writing, initiate little rituals to welcome guests, to start a day, to discuss a problem. Focus on the process and not on the result. Encourage peer-to-peer-learning. Keep busy head, heart and hand of your students.

Bring together teachers and students from several schools for transnational laboratories. The difference between our education systems is our richness, although it is difficult to live it. An innovative society needs ambiguity-tolerance, it must be able to endure different positions.

We need confidence in the future, the courage for visions, the belief that our students will save the world that we have left to them robbed and consumed and that they will finally free theatre from the feudalism of its founding era, three hundred years ago.

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