



AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 MINUTES

A HUMORISTIC RACE FOR THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL

BIENNALE

SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL has been invited by the curators of the BIENNALE BERN to contribute a piece on this year's topic: capital. They asked us to create a piece or a performance specifically for this BIENNALE and to include the participating institutions.

Their aim, according to their concept, is to shed some light on the "ambivalence and complexity" of the notion of "capital". The paper states that "Marx's capital mistake", namely his "euro-centric idea of ONE History that is taking place everywhere at the same time" is not being reflected enough today, since exploitation is now taking place "not so much inside industrialized nation states" but in the countries of the so called second and third world "where the political autonomy on the level of international humanitarian law [is used] as a shield for the exploitation structures on the economic level".

In the industrialized countries, however, (shouldn't we call them post-industrial countries since the bigger part of industrial production – and its forms of exploitation – are globally outsourced?) a capitalization of all spheres of life is taking place. Notions like "human capital" have become normalized – although that very notion reflects probably the biggest conflict of modern history: the conflict between labour and capital.

The fact that art was not able to resist this capitalization is not astonishing under these circumstances and neither is the fact that artists have become the avant-garde of a self-exploiting economic system in which capital in all its forms and variations is traded as the magic potion that allegedly provides untold strength.

This is our situation. SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL includes these preliminaries in its AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 MINUTES and combines them with its own political and artistic positions.

CAPITAL

The piece is a journey through Berne and a trip around the world at the same time. We will go on a quest for capital here and everywhere. We understand the notion of "capital" in its broader sense, following Bourdieu who differentiates economic, cultural and social capital and who combines these three sub-categories into the term "symbolic capital". The symbolic capital as a whole is relevant to the societal access to positions of power, the way it combines as such then is variable. As useful as Bourdieu's sociological distinction might be, it carries the risk of underestimating the importance of the notion of economic capital. The economic capital – one of the three basic factors of production besides land and labour in classical economics, in other words: the private property, the means of production – after all has named the economic system in which we live not primarily because capital is part of it, but because this system follows the interest of capital – or rather: its owners. When we speak about "capital" hereinafter, all levels of meaning are addressed but the economic meaning is especially emphasized.

Money might not exactly be lying around in the streets, but the development of those streets, the form of a city and what it becomes are all profoundly influenced by capital. Because the forces of capital aren't bound by country or even town borders, one can find many different places at a specific location in the world. AROUND THE

WORLD IN 80 MINUTES follows these vectors. Berne is particularly well suited for this endeavour because the world has numerous subsidiaries here: there are 85 diplomatic missions (there are 27 in Geneva, and 56 in other cities such as Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, London or Paris). Hence we will go on a 80 minutes trip around Berne's embassy neighbourhoods (there are several) and thereby travel the world.

This is one part of it. The other part wants to show what the capitalization of all spheres of life means for an artist and what effort is tied to it. After all, capitalism is not a piece of cake. It has brought forth the performance society. The 80 minutes journey around the world will be accompanied by a runner. His goal is to set foot on as many countries as possible and to gather as much material – you can call it resources if you like – as possible. At the end of his run, he will appear on stage and will have to meet the challenges of the audience.

He will transfer his accumulation of capital to the production of art. This is the bet he makes – after Phileas Fogg, the protagonist of Jules Verne's novel: the bet that capitalism, just like the globe, never stops spinning around itself.

THE JOURNEY

What does this show look like? Someone runs from one embassy to another for 80 minutes. He is followed by a bus that carries the audience. The runner wears a headset, the audience in the vehicle can hear his breath. Inside the bus, two commentators accompany the spectators and speak about the race. You can imagine the two like Hüppi and Russi at the Lauberhorn race. One speaks German, the other speaks Swiss German, one follows the athlete, the other gives background information. The two comment the track and analyze to what extent capital is present. They speak about what is visible and how it has become what it is and what it means. And they discuss the countries that are visited. So, for example, in front of the Russian embassy in the neighbourhood Elfenau, one would not only get to know something about capital's astonishing loyalty to the old elites during the last Russian revolution, but also some information on the price tag of the house in which those elites are represented. (This is quite an intriguing way of mapping the world order: according to the real estate value of their embassies.)

Once the runner has reached an embassy, he steps out of the light beam of the bus, the acoustic connection breaks off and the audience can watch him through the side windows and see how he meets an embassy employee, how the two briefly talk. What the audience does not know: the runner is told a characteristic joke of that particular country. Then he returns to the street and continues the run – the hounding, if you like, since the artist is impelled by no one else than the audience.

After exactly 80 minutes the convoy reaches a participating institution of the Biennale. (It is probable that the trip starts there as well, it doesn't have to, though.) The audience is greeted by a show master, moves inside, takes place in the house (a space that either actually exists or is signified), and immediately sees the runner on stage. Spurred on by that master of ceremony who also animates the spectators, the runner – now a stand-up comedian – begins to tell all the jokes he can remember in his exertion. He wants to, he must succeed as a stand-up. This is an artist's life: artists gather things along their way that they might use for their work but in the end they are their very own means of production: the own transpiring body and the throbbing blood.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 MINUTES is no big deal in theatrical terms, however it is quite a logistic challenge. The employees of the participating embassies must collaborate, probably the convoy needs an escort vehicle, maybe even a police car. We do think this piece is feasible, however. We have worked with busses before, we made one piece in the snow, and one from a train that was in motion. And we even have someone who is able to run for 80 minutes. Since this is the hardest thing in capitalism anyway: your own capitalized assets.

THE COMPANY

SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL was co-founded in 1999 by Anna-Lisa Ellend and Albert Liebl in Erlach, Switzerland. Since 2001 the company's core is composed of four members (Anna-Lisa Ellend, Albert Liebl, Lars Studer and Martin Bieri), they regularly invite artist friends to participate and they work primarily out of Berne and Berlin.

The extraordinary concept of the group, their radical attitude towards conventional representation of actors on stage and the intense study of current political and societal issues, makes them one of the most interesting independent theatre companies in the German speaking region. Their aesthetics is as unique as it is honest and unpretentious. The company systematically searches to overcome the antagonism of form and content and to let presence and representation fall together on stage. Their continuous exploration of the conditions of construction of the world entails a permanent artistic being on the border between reality and fiction, where witty plays and performances are made that carry a sense for the tragedy of one's own existence. Their longstanding and uncompromising presence in the theatre scene has made SI a reference for contemporary theatre.

BIOGRAPHIES

Anna-Lisa Ellend *1970 in Zug, graduated from the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst Luzern (Switzerland), majoring in education for drawing and handicraft, in 1999 graduated from Hochschule für Musik und Theater Bern (Switzerland), worked at the Badisches Staatstheater in Karlsruhe (Germany), co-founded SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL together with Albert Liebl, co-director of all their productions, news moderator at Telebielingue until 2003, substitutions as teacher for visual arts, since 2010 local councillor, lives in Erlach, Switzerland.

Lars Studer *1967 in Zurich, graduated from the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst MOZARTEUM Salzburg, majoring in acting. Various theatre, music and film projects in Berlin. Was commissioned a composition by the Swiss Center for Computer Music, since 2000 member of SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL, also co-directs since 2001, various jobs as industrial dis-assembler (scrap metal) and as assistant kindergarten teacher. Lars Studer has lived and worked in Berlin since 1987.

Albert Liebl *1973 in Regensburg (Germany), participated in various independent theatre and performance projects, graduated from Hochschule für Musik und Theater Bern in 1999, co-founder of SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL, co-director of all their productions, various jobs as night porter, carpenter, assistant metal worker and soccer trainer for children, lives in Erlach, Switzerland.

Martin Bieri *1977 in Berne. Graduated from the University of Berne, Switzerland and wrote a dissertation on contemporary theatre and landscape theory. Worked as

dramaturg and as artistic director of the secondary venue, UG, at the Luzerner Theater from 1999 to 2002. Since 2002 independent author, dramaturg, theatre scholar and sports journalist. In 2009, dramaturg at the THEATER NEUMARKT in Zurich. Various plays, publications and awards, Since 2002 continuously with SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL. Lives in Berne.

Eva-Maria Bertschy *1982 in Düringen, Switzerland, studied literary criticism and political economy at the University of Freiburg, Switzerland. Since 2009, she is a researcher at the Hochschule der Künste Bern and media agent for the FESTIVAL BEL-LUARD BOLLWERK INTERNATIONAL (Freiburg, Switzerland). In 2009 she co-directed the project KINDER ZU UNTERNEHMERN (children as entrepreneurs) by Judith Wilske, and in 2011 she participated scientifically and dramaturgically in the project HATE RADIO by the INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL MURDER, since 2011 she is executive producer of SCHAUPLATZ INTERNATIONAL.