

Theater: Playstation

Since the year 2000 the Hamburg-based Theater: Playstation has become a platform for artistic projects with social and political background of independent directors. It was founded by David Chotjewitz in cooperation with the Volkshochschule (the social, public school for adults) and the Evangelic Church, and is produced by the Kampnagel Theater since 2002.

In 2001, we staged a play with teenagers, "Die Traumwandler" (Dreamwalkers), in 2002, "Blut on the Dancefloor" (Blood on the Dancefloor) with young actors and musicians, based on a real incident, in a techno-discotheque on the Reeperbahn and in the Kampnagel Music Hall. With a scenic reading "Daniel Halber Mensch" we toured through Germany and, by invitation of German schools, through Spain and Portugal.

In 2003/4, we performed a street-musical "Stirb, Popstar, stirb" ("Popstar must die") on Kampnagel and in 2005 an adaption of "Boys Don't Cry" with young professional actors, that was staged in real sites: In abandoned houses and empty apartments on the outskirts of the town.

Playstation often works with non-professional performers at the age of 16-24, with different ethnical background, but also with professional actors, rappers, singers, dancers... Teenagers participate, partly for years, in acting-, singing-, and dancing-classes. The projects are guided by the author and director David Chotjewitz together with singers (Anke Schaubrenner), choreographers (Trinidad Martínez from Magpie Productions), actors (Katharina Oberlik from She She Pop), filmers, fine artist and others. Our productions have been commissioned by the Cultural Board (Kulturbehörde) of Hamburg, the Fonds für Darstellende Künste and others.

Our aim is to create artistically innovative and entertaining musical and theatrical performances with surprising and powerful elements based on authentic experiences of the young performers. As some of the performers come from local hip-hop show-dance formations, rock-bands, film-groups etc, these elements influence the scenic form.

The most important theme of Theater: Playstation is music.

Young people live with music, and more: to a great extent music is their life. They identify with hip-hop, rock, techno or pop, but also with their personal or cultural background of African or Asian musical traditions. This musical identity (soul) strongly influences the way the body is experienced and moved, how self and society is experienced.

We explore these influences and search for expression.

Another important item is the situation of young people in Germany who are, as immigrants or because of their skin colour, strangers - and their dreams of fame.

Why do so many teenagers today dream of stardom? It allows to develop the own being - at least that's how it seems. And: a society that reduces the person to its function, without giving value to the human being itself, produces the need to be someone, to have a meaning. Strange enough, stardom seems to be the only place where everyday human actions keep their meaning.

One of the ideas of the Playstation-project is, that the characters, situations, scenes and songs are developed from the inside and past stories of the performers lives.

Through a process of group and single-talks, of writing-exercises and improvisations we derive a personal nucleus for each figure.

From this we derive the characters and the storyline. Then we start to create a distance between the person and its character by changing the story, finding new elements.

At the same time we try to challenge every performer to find and experience his own borders and limitations.

This work gives the possibility to work on the own dreams, stories and wishes.

The young participants have to work very hard and steadily, but get a strong conformation for it.

They come from very different parts of the city, cultural backgrounds, languages and live-situations. Some of them grew up under the most depriving circumstances. To mix these backgrounds in one group helps to integrate and gives a special creative atmosphere.

Another result of the Playstation work was the novel "Crazy Diamond", published in Spring 2005, that is presently translated into English for Simon and Schusters, N.Y.

Also in spring 2005, we opened a new project, a kind of acting school for kids, who search for orientation about ways to develop their artistic career. This pilot-project is commissioned by the European Social Fonds.

As a first result of this project we have shown the youth theatre project „goethe / liebe / sample / culture“, which investigates the relations between personal, cultural and national identity and the heritage of classic German literature.

In 2008, Theater: Playstation successfully presented the local version of „Behörde für Lieblingslieder“ in Hamburg. For „The European Ministry for Favourite Songs“ Theater: Playstation develops the "Living Juke-Box". Additionally to the bus with the mobile office, the „Living Juke Box“ is another linking element in this transnational project: the band of the mobile office, ready for action at all times and places.

Like with a juke box, visitors can choose from a list of popular songs and famous interpreters. The songs are then presented in partly surprising, peculiar cover versions.

For more information visit our website [www.theaterplaystation.de](http://www.theaterplaystation.de)