

Chapter 5

Theatre Projects in Prisons



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Abstract The chapter will reflect on the specificity of art projects in prisons, their methods and their impacts on the participants, the prisons and the societies at large. The author will provide an overview of more than 20 years of work with detainees and will include individual stories and reflections by minors in prison and visitors. aufBruch was founded in 1997 and produces public arts and theatre projects in all prisons and in other public spaces in the city of Berlin. Performances, which are thematically connected to the "Inside" productions, are created once a year in spaces outside prison not normally used for theatre, with a mixed team with actors and ex-inmates. The chapter will present the experience of aufBruch in Germany, paying particular attention to the theatrical activities carried out in several European projects, including PROVA.

Keywords Theatre projects · Penal institutions · Theatre in prisons · Art projects with prisoners · Competencies development

5.1 The Prison System in Germany

On the 31 March 2017, there were a total of 51,643 people in prison in the Federal Republic of Germany (48,609 men and 3034 women), of these 8273 in day or temporary release and 43,370 in closed prisons. Along with 3889 people in young offenders prisons and 561 people in preventative detention, the remaining prisoners can be divided as follows: 31,540 people sentenced to a maximum of two years, 10,244 for more than two up to a maximum of five years, 3578 for more than five up to a maximum of fifteen years and 1831 to imprisonment for life.

In total, this is equal to approximately 76.5 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. A comparison of other European countries shows that Scandinavia has the lowest numbers of prisoners (Denmark: 59, Finland and Sweden: each 57), while the former Eastern bloc states including the Baltic states have the highest number of prisoners

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(Lithuania: 235, Latvia: 218, Czech Republic: 212, Estonia: 208, Poland: 195; the USA for comparison: 666). The cost per year incurred by running the prison system in Germany is estimated at three to four billion Euro. The percentage of foreign prisoners is more than 35%, in juvenile prison often more than 50%.

In German penal law, the aim of imprisonment is clearly stated to be resocialisation. However, socialisation is often spoken of, since it is assumed that some of those sentenced to imprisonment are only made familiar with socially binding norms for the first time in the context of the prison system. Many detainees come from milieus, where these norms have not been taught or are excreted in advance from all social cycles such as school, education and work. Furthermore, it is also the prison system's mandate to protect the population from further crimes. However, according to accepted opinion, this is not an equal aim as that of the sentence. Much rather, this merely expresses the safety aspect of imprisonment (negative special prevention) as the minor task of the execution of the sentence. The consideration of other purposes of punishment, such as compensation for guilt or general prevention, is not accepted in planning the conditions of a prison sentence according to general opinion.

The fundamental principles are encoded in law¹:

- According to the approximation principle, the social situation within prisons should approximate that of the outside world insofar as is possible, for example, through work, leisure and education.
- According to the countermeasures principle, the harmful results of imprisonment are to be counteracted, for example, through visits and more open imprisonment models, such as temporary release, day release and long-term day release.
- According to the reintegration principle, the prisoner should be prepared for their life after imprisonment, for example, through long-term day release, early permanent release, as well as support during and after release.

After the verdict has legally come into force, the prisoners enter an open or closed correctional facility. Around 15% of sentences are carried out in open prisons. At the beginning of the prison sentence, a treatment assessment is carried out with the participation of the prisoner. This serves to establish the relationship of the prisoner to their crime regarding acknowledgement of guilt and explanation attempts, the prisoner's personal circumstances before the crime and in terms of socialisation, as well as their potential and limits for resocialisation in the time they serve their sentence.

This process is especially thorough with violent and sexual criminals; in that, the person's psychological condition, the significance of possibly existing personality disorders for the crime committed and the person's understanding are described using psychological diagnosis. If necessary, all available sources of information are used

¹Law on the Execution of the Imprisonment and the Deprivation of Liberty and Security Measures/Gesetz über den Vollzug der Freiheitsstrafe und der freiheitsentziehenden Maßregeln der Besserung und Sicherung (Strafvollzugsgesetz—StVollzG).

for this, especially the verdict, legal assessment and details from the national central register.

This results in a sentence plan, which sketches the course of imprisonment regarding individual goals (work, training, school education, developing social contacts, prescription for treatment through psychological or social therapy, whether they are suitable for day release programmes, etc.). The sentence plan is regularly added to, to check goals and required measures and if necessary change them. The prison system's responsibility to treat the prisoners demands that both prisons offer the appropriate treatments and that the prisoners work towards achieving the goals of the sentence plan.

Socialisation or resocialisation is an explicit goal according to the law, but how this is to take place or how it can be achieved is not defined in more detail anywhere. Considering the high portion of prisoners with a migrant background, a falling level of education among prisoners and the high number of repeat offenders, the question comes up again and again of how the system can get through to these people and which options exist at all that promise the most success for integration into social processes. School leaving certificates, completed professional training, sufficient knowledge of the German language and successful employment have for some time now no longer been the rule. Single training modules are more common since 2010. Precisely involvement in artistic projects, which can at least partly correspond to inmates' interests and which address and deal with the cultural and social realities of their lives, has proven to be a successful tool in reintegrating prisoners into social life in the last few years.

aufBruch KUNST GEFÄNGNIS STADT is one of those independent artist organisations, which has been creating and providing such projects, by now for more than twenty years since 1996. It is one of the most renowned and professional prison theatre projects in Germany and Europe, and in the now twenty or more years that it has existed, has become well known outside Germany thanks to a large number of productions and shows, invitations to notable festivals and wide-ranging positive reviews in the national and international press.²

aufBruch's theatre works in prisons and in public space are based on the concept of involving people (who have committed crimes) of all ages, from different social backgrounds and cultural milieus, as well as with various levels of language and education, in artistic projects and to then make the final work of art available to the wider public. Through this work on the artistic projects, a space is created in

²*Theater der Zeit*/Heft 10 2019/www.theaterderzeit.de/2019/10.

Gefängnistheater aufBruch: A Prison Theatre Project in Berlin by Rebecca Jacobsen/execute magazine June 2015/<https://exeuntmagazine.com/features/gefangnistheater-aufbruch-a-prison-theatre-project-in-berlin/>

Prison theater group bridges society and its outcasts by Ben Knight/DW.com/July 2011/<https://www.dw.com/en/prison-theater-group-bridges-society-and-its-outcasts/a-15219043>

Precarious Presence in Contemporary Theater by Natasha Siouzouli/questia.com/nov 2007/<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-372956605/precarius-presence-in-contemporary-theater>

Broadway behind bars by Edd Meza/variety.com/June 2007/<https://variety.com/2007/legit/news/broadway-behind-bars-1117967465/>

which different social groups and classes can meet, trends towards discrimination are counteracted and integration is encouraged.

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³ states that every human being has the right to participate in cultural life and to enjoy the arts. Equally, artistic work as part of a comprehensive concept of culture and education should be recognised in our society as a basic right, which is also valid for prisoners. The right to art as a basic human right—also and especially in prison—was successfully proposed by aufBruch to be included in the amendment to the Berlin law on the enforcement of prison sentences. The task in the next few years will be to make this right a reality in practice in Berlin prisons and to establish the unquestionable nature of this right as well as public accessibility.

Since its foundation in 1996, aufBruch has been working exceptionally successfully in Berlin prisons and the city of Berlin and has produced more than 90 productions with more than 1300 performers. It has also produced plays in Russian and Chilean prisons and is involved in a large number of European research and network projects, as described in the following paragraphs.

5.2 The Beginning

In 1996, a small group of artists came together around Holger Syrbe and Roland Brus who all shared the aim of initiating artistic projects that addressed social problems and made them visible. After their first projects with homeless people, they began to focus on the issue of prison. They made contact with Berlin Tegel prison. There was very little experience in the area at all. Of course, there had been a few attempts by volunteers and social workers to rehearse plays with prisoners. But that a group of professional artists would approach the facility with the request of working with prisoners as an independent group in the prison and then show the result as a public theatre event was completely new. Internationally, there were already some forerunners, such as the San Quentin Drama Workshop and the Compagnia de la Fortezza in Volterra run by Armando Punzo (Photo 5.1).

But the idea of opening the prison to the public and allowing an independent crew of artists to work with the prisoners without any major interventions by the prison system did represent a significant safety risk that unsettled the prison management. Months of meetings and negotiations followed, there were supporters in both political and artistic institutions, and then, there were finally some positive signals from the prison management. At the end of 1996, the first performances and interventions in the JVA Tegel (Tegel prison) took place. A troupe of actors walked through the prison wearing diving suits, drumming, busied themselves measuring cells and corridors and acted out a visit from the management of a company to an oil drilling island in Tegel Lake in front of other prisoners. In a different wing of the prison, a group of actors performed scenes from a mediaeval castle cut off from the world by a siege with

³ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Resolution 217 A (III) from 10.12.1948).



Photo 5.1 Stein und Fleisch/Stone and Flesh (1997). (Source copyright Thomas Aurin, with permission to use the photos in the book)

a live goat, which quickly became an object of great affection. These performances thus brought the idea into the prison, and an internal theatre group was subsequently founded. In spring 1997, work began on the first production. In July 1997, the first premiere of the prisoners' theatre group aufBruch took place in the culture hall, a performance of the play "Stein und Fleisch" in front of an external audience and fellow prisoners, followed by three further shows and then a guest performance in the women's prison in Berlin. The play was based on motifs from the life of the slave Spartacus and was set in ancient Rome. Twenty performers from eight nations conquered the stage for themselves as a space free of censorship and told the story of their daily survival rituals in the arena of Tegel using the literary foil of slaves and gladiators in ancient Rome. Walking the knife-edge between fiction and reality like this became an essential feature of later work. The subsequent guest performance in the women's prison in Plötzensee was a first in German prison and theatre history and left lasting impressions on everyone. The spontaneously improvised bowing sequence by the ensemble, when they stripped off their clothes, became legendary.

The rehearsal process had taken five months, two to three four-hour rehearsals a week, more towards the end. Improvisations, group exercises, trust exercises, games, speech and voice training took up a large part of the first few weeks, since there was usually no basic understanding of what theatre is or can be at all. There were also many intense conversations with the participants, through which a number of biographical components and elements were collected to use in the production. The rehearsal process with such a multi-cultural and multi-lingual group turned out to be

very complicated. Problems with communication, a lack of acceptance for different needs and abilities, various addictions (e.g. drug addictions, debts) and the structures of the prison constantly interfered with the work. However, the participants also quickly realised that new possibilities were opening up for them there, that things were being spoken about that were otherwise not addressed, that they were being taken seriously as individuals and that they were being given a space in which they could feel free in their otherwise strictly regulated daily lives. They were no longer seen only as prisoners, but as partners who could achieve something in a piece of work. Along with the prisoners, some actors, male and female, also took part in the project in order to help ease any fear of contact with the unfamiliar medium of theatre.

The audience too was very impressed by the intense and powerful stage presence of the performers, many layers of the production and the possibility of entering a prison as a visitor and coming into contact with its inmates. The clichés that the visitors had about criminals were tested for their validity by the impressive theatre performance and the personal encounters afterwards. Suddenly, the prisoners were perceived as (fellow) human beings.

The security checks and admission process were a big challenge for the prison. The shortage of staff in prisons beleaguered our work from the very beginning, in fact got even worse over time. Only in the last few years has this trend improved somewhat and by employing new staff, it was attempted to create conditions in prison that correspond to the legal requirements for imprisonment and made the goal of the sentence, resocialisation, the main focus. Nonetheless, the majority of the prison's money still goes to preventing escape and maintaining the security system, and only a fraction goes to education, culture and social requirements.

There was a large public response in the press. The prison management also realised that "good news" about prisons in the press was also possible.

Here, the theatre... is always a complex experiment, which from the start questions publicly performing in this place itself. Reality? Does one see it? The accompanying text cleverly warns against the false assumption: Theatre in prison hides the prison publicly from those who are looking for it.⁴

The play is over. Applause, cheers and the happy faces of the actors are the reward for this concentrated major effort in an extreme location.⁵

Perception in the prison was divided. Some of the prisoners came to see the show, but a large number of them did not even realise the theatre existed. There were protests from the staff committee about increased overtime, the attitude "*we have enough drama here*" and "*the prisoners should be serving their sentence, not playing around*", as well as many security concerns. But a large number of the prison officers also saw the work positively and as having a meaningful purpose. With support from the prison management and the social work department, it was decided to continue the projects. Since then, work has continued without a break and been expanded to more and more prisons. Of course, in subsequent years, the theatre has remained a

⁴Berliner Zeitung, 03.07.1997.

⁵Märkische Allgemeine, 07.07.1997.

cumbersome foreign object in the prisons, but nonetheless one that today belongs to it in Berlin without question.

5.3 Our Projects

aufBruch: the name also represents the concept of our project (aufBruch in German language is: to break out, depart, start)—a breaking out of existing the structures with the aim of the integration and interaction between all classes of society.

Art is our medium, our way of working. In our work, we strive to make art accessible to social strata that otherwise do not have much contact with it. We try to bring art out of its aesthetic ghetto into the social topography of the city and society. Our work can present the familiar image of the city on site in a new light and allow it to be experienced in a new way. In this process, theatre is our main medium, but we also work with video and film, installation, music and choreographic and workshop techniques. Our working method always takes reference to its protagonists, who usually come from the fringes of society and grow together to become a multi-national, multi-lingual ensemble. The powerful act of speaking words is an extreme form expression in aufBruch's work. The work of making those words their own becomes visible; the discrepancy between text and performer disappears into an art form that is their own. "The otherwise invisible people", since people locked away with difficult biographies, people (largely) without any stage experiences use their bodies in a primal way to express on the stage.

The prison as a locked and hidden space isolated from society is our place of investigation, and it feeds our work with its stories. When we make theatre in prison, then not only because it sharpens our view of everyday reality "outside", but also because the reality of the prison also provides answers to the urgent question of the function theatre/art, its themes, materials, tools for examining reality today and especially its benefits. In prison, one encounters everything as if under a magnifying glass: the system of power and every human emotion... violence, power, powerlessness, hierarchy, control, love, hate, pain, addiction, longing... in its work, aufBruch always explores those places that are populated and shaped by people with difficult biographies, but who are in turn also shaped by these places. Discovering these places—whether it is the prison or public spaces and other locations in the city—as art spaces, to fill them, make them visible and bring them into social discourse is an essential part of aufBruch's artistic work. Thus, the majority of our productions take place in prison, but can be attended by an external audience in public performances. In this way, a space for an encounter free of prejudice is created between various social groups and classes, trends of social discrimination are counteracted and integration is encouraged. We work almost exclusively in closed prisons.

The city is our shared living environment and with its complexity and conflicting interests determines our artistic work. The cycles of social processes and the problems of a multi-national society are the basis for a diverse artistic exploration and transformation. Research and interview work in various areas are a characteristic

feature of aufBruch's activities. In this way, an artistic exploration takes place that intervenes in controversial social processes and makes these describable—a new form of making the reality we live in visible. The stories, inspiration and performers from prison are brought into public places in the city and are given a new visibility and meaning there. In the public space of the city, places where theatre does not usually take place, in forgotten places, aufBruch finds its second home for developing its external projects with a 20–25-person mixed ensemble of ex-prisoners, prisoners on release programmes, professional actors and Berlin citizens, in order to address the current social debates and make them visible in public perception through exceptional people, projects and locations in a special way. aufBruch's focus on a multi-cultural ensemble from many social classes is an essential factor in shaping the statements in the productions. This is decisive for the relevance and public presence of the performances, which are seen as exemplary intercultural, integrative work in the city of Berlin.

aufBruch understands criminal energy to be the engine and driving force for artistic work that deals with fundamental moral and ethical values in today's society. Each and every one of us carries this criminal energy somewhere inside them. The people who cannot channel this energy are our protagonists in the prisons. The transformation of criminal energy into culture and art creates a special form of aesthetic expression, characterised by a high level of directness and energy. The body, text and unconscious interact dynamically.

When selecting material, aufBruch chooses from works from the classical, realist and modernist periods. Their literary power and rhythm are adapted to the modern language and speech habits of various different actors, enabling a new way of accessing these texts that goes beyond traditional interpretations of them and allowing the social conflict inherent to the plays to be made visible and audible. aufBruch seeks out archetypal conflicts in these plays and translates their content into visually and linguistically rhythmic forms on the stage. Play such as "The Robbers" by Schiller, "Roberto Zucco" by Koltes and "The Tempest" by Shakespeare has been staged, but also "Schwejk" by Hasek, "Spartacus" by Howard Fast and "Parsifal" by Wagner. Compared with the usual stereotyping that people with a non-German background experience in film, TV and theatre, aufBruch's aesthetic approach enables a new perspective: since the very beginning with aufBruch, a Romanian Don Quixote, a Turkish Odysseus and a Lebanese Hamlet, for example, have stood on the stage without question. The main challenge of every production, "inside" and "outside" has to motivate the participants again and again to bring their own personal potential to bear on the production and to create a new type of artistic interaction and form of expression.

In our productions, the texts from classical—often German—high culture are often spoken and embodied by people for whom German is their first foreign language and who are strangers to the fine arts and traditional, Western European educational biographies. The way that the prisoners make the texts their own and the way that these texts are cast in a whole new light through this process open up spaces where what we believe is familiar to us can be heard and interpreted in a new way.

In 2011, aufBruch was awarded the George Tabori prize for its artistic approach, as well as the Berlin Integration Prize in 2012.

5.3.1 *Theatre Projects in Prisons*

Since 2004, the project and aufBruch's artistic theatre work has been managed by Peter Atanassow, Sibylle Arndt and Holger Syrbe, under whose direction the prisoners have again and again formed ensembles with linguistic and expressive power, who, with their unexpected level of professionalism, paired with the authenticity of the prisoners, have been able to develop a new theatre language.

... since Einar Schleaf died, such intense and focussed battle-cry cannon-fire has not been seen in the theatre as in this furious production by the prison theatre group aufBruch...⁶

Initially, projects were only made in Tegel prison, but since then, our field of work continued to expand and more and more prisons were acquired as partners. Since 2014, aufBruch works in all the prisons in Berlin. In all the large correctional facilities, theatre projects were and are being produced (Tegel prison, Berlin juvenile prison, Plötzensee prison, Heidering prison).

We strive to work with a mixed artistic team of men and women, German and foreign artists, professionals and those at the beginning of their careers; in order to actively oppose any prejudice and resentments, the prisoners may have from the very beginning. The diversity and mixture of our artistic team have proved to be extremely effective over the years in meeting the wide-ranging cultural and multi-national spectrum of the prisoners with a diverse, individual experience background on our part and to be able to develop flexible, innovative working methods.

Through daily routines decided by others and necessary rules inherent to the system asserted authoritatively, the "prison as a totalitarian institution" impedes the natural development of decision-making competence, maturity, self-responsible and self-determined behaviour—all core competencies that are essential in the world outside in order to function as a valuable, satisfied and successful member of society. Most of the participating detainees are social outsiders, often without a school leaving certificate, without high levels of social competence, the ability to work in a team, family support, self-confidence and tolerance for aggression. They often have few prospects for the future and a lack of social integration and are thus isolated, excluded and exposed to discrimination. The recidivism rate for released prisoners is extremely high; moreover, long-lasting criminalisation often only occurs first in prison (the prison as "the school of crime"). They lack (school and cultural) education, basic and media competencies and equally tangible professional qualifications, prospects and control of their lives, controlled, targeted, effective and goal-orientated deployable verbal and nonverbal communication techniques, linguistic competence, diplomacy, tolerance towards fellow workers, awareness of the opportunities of cultural diversity,

⁶*Zitty magazine*, 21/2002.

stamina, commitment, reliability and consistency, discipline, the ability to deal with conflict and see things from others' perspective and capacity for empathy. They also often lack key personal experiences that could give them self-assurance, self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as sufficient artistic, creative opportunities for validation in order to ensure a meaningful use of their leisure time, which could also serve as a means to let out some of their aggression.

The true purpose of art is not to create beautiful objects. It is much rather a method for understanding. A way of penetrating the world and finding one's one place in it. (Auster 2007)

When they begin their sentence, the prisoners are forced to undergo a process of conforming and depersonalisation. Restrictions on freedom of movement and social contact reduce the autonomy and independence of the prisoners. Everyday routines are controlled by others down to the smallest detail. For example, they are often only allowed a small number of photos, letters or books in their cells. These rules are designed to maintain security, so that cells can be quickly searched. The prison system is characterised by hierarchical relationships, on the one hand the relationship between prison officers and prisoners, but also the relationships of prisoners to each other. Behind prison walls, not only is justice carried out, but also a merciless system of oppression reigns, where the strongest rules by force. Prison is a system in which one is what one represents or can represent, sorted according to muscle power, relationships and crimes. A small, constant war is waged for influence and positions. Rapes and suicide attempts are not a rarity. Anyone who is reduced to only the status of a prisoner and is defined as a criminal only perceives themselves one-dimensionally. A loss of culture and damage caused by imprisonment is an expression of this.

Having to submit ourselves, that's what's wrong. But in the end, we all submit all the time: to tradition, family, authority, duty. Rebelling against this always has disastrous consequences—who's strong enough to carry that cross ...? We submit to everything and everyone, the living and the dead. Only our needs, our dreams and our passions too—we don't give those up. And we shouldn't! And if we "for once" live for ourselves, then never for very long. A moment here, a moment there. Just long enough for no one to notice. ...That's why we will all live for ourselves, but each individual a life that they did not choose themselves. So: the more we submit, the less we can desire: love, life or whatever. (Christian T, JVA Tegel 2017)

The extreme situation in prison constantly influences our artistic work, the themes, the creative process and the result. A theme chosen beforehand must be flexible enough to be reworked, since one never knows in advance how big the group of participants will be, whether people will drop out or be barred from attending for disciplinary reasons. The mixture of different cultures and religious backgrounds too always has an influence on the project's creative process. The conflicts the participants have in their daily lives often overshadow the work, cause frustration, depression and a lack of motivation and also often quickly affect the other performers. In our work, we try to push the reality of prison aside for a while and to create an "alternative reality". Establishing understanding for the space of freedom that is theatre in the participants, who mostly have no experience with art from their socialisation, is a laborious process. A situation in a play has to be explained, and parallels to their own

lives must be drawn in order to understand it. What happens in a scene can be developed using improvised acting, but this introduction contains problems too. *Theatre is helpful, but also means stress, because our everyday conflicts are brought with us*—says one participant (Ali, JVA Plötzensee 2016). The basis for improvisations can be lines from the play, props, acting out everyday situations or dream sequences. Imagination, thinking, observation, sensitivity, feeling, will, values, spontaneous gestural and physical expression and the ability to react quickly produce a creative working environment. The task is then to artistically transform that according to the performers' abilities and talents.

aufBruch's productions link the classics of drama with the prisoners' lives and emphasise aspects of the plays the productions are based on, to which the actors have a direct relationship, such as criminality, violence, lack of power, subjugation and social exclusion.

A large part of our work is motivation. We try to keep all participants occupied and give them all something to do, and everyone should have a share in the responsibility in the group. Shared rituals help to achieve this, such as an opening circle and a vocal warm-up, but the largest block is choric work. Everyone is part of the chorus. The chorus transports a large portion of the content; we practise and train it every day, almost ritually. The performance situation of the chorus contrasted with the individual is exemplary for many of our productions and also reflects the situation in prison. The use of other material, biographical elements and texts from the performers as well as the intense collage-like reworking of the original plays using other texts, spitting and multiplying characters and the adaptation of large passages as choric texts are our typical working methods. The chorus is the centre of our artistic work and in its force and precision a significant feature of aufBruch's aesthetic identity. The chorus, which originates from ancient theatre, forms the basis of our artistic mode of expression.

The splitting of characters into multiple performers comes from the idea of the chorus. aufBruch is not concerned with psychological role play or logical character development. The authentic actor plays the character as an archetype, and his personal expression characterises the essence of the character. If the character changes over the course of the play, the actor changes too. Women's roles are also played by men. We often need to work quite hard and overcome many clichés to convince the actors to do this.

Along with producing exceptional theatre and art, the aim of the project is also to provide the participating prisoners with a meaningful way to spend their free time, career orientation in this area, an expansion of intercultural perspectives and qualification for the job market, as well as support in the transfer process to the job market through a practice-orientated, creative work and learning experience. Along with teaching the concrete skills required for the profession, the focus is on the fundamental learning of important social and personal basic competencies, such as a sense of responsibility, tolerance, discipline, motivation and group compatibility, as well as cultural and language skills, which are necessary requirements for successful reintegration and a real chance at participating in social (working) life later. Our work also strives to prevent radicalisation tendencies.

The assumption that people (young people and adults) who perform theatre tend to become more open and open-minded, more content with themselves and experience the feeling of being able to handle difficult situations successfully, that performing theatre develops various personal competencies (self-awareness, stamina, self-discipline, self-expression, good judgement, critical thinking, belief in one's own effectiveness) and encourages openness towards other cultures, enables the ability to look at things from another's perspective and has a strong influence on self-confidence, has now been proven many times. Through dance, body and movement work, they also learn nonverbal communication techniques, which are an essential basic skill and the basis of job application trainings. Working in the arts is also very effective at giving participants a sense of purpose. Even after short period, they no longer do it for their sentence plan, but for themselves. They no longer only experience themselves as failed or rejected, but as a member of a functioning group. They are very concentrated on they work, time flies, and in the end, something visible exists that is a manifestation of the process. However, these processes are not automatically successful. Obstacles such as a lack of self-confidence, distractions, irritation, tiredness, etc., must be continuously overcome during the process. For many detainees, it is a huge achievement to complete the work on a production in a group successfully. On the one hand, they experience that the continuous work in an ensemble strengthens them. However, they also learn that it is necessary to push their own sensitivities and mental state into the background during that process. Respect and trust are created by exercises as a group.

5.3.2 Working Method

The projects all proceed according to a similar pattern in different prisons, adapted to the specific situation in each prison. Together with the prison management and partners from the social-educational departments, the security departments and group leaders and social workers, we work out the basic framework of the project we are planning. The work is divided into five subsections as follows.

I. *Project presentation/Search for participants.*

After a planning phase with the prison in question, the aufBruch team go into the prison to present and explain the planned project to the prisoners interested. Contact with the prisoners that is as direct as possible increases the chances of interest and the development of a stable, motivated and large theatre group. We hang up posters, but also try to reactivate the previous participants to spread the word and thus create a larger group. We also cooperate with social workers, group leaders and prison officers in making announcements and speaking directly to suitable candidates to convince them to take part. In principle, any prisoner can take part in the projects, as long as there are no restrictions on the prison's side. The prison checks whether each participant is able to participate. aufBruch does not differentiate on the basis of the crime

committed, religion, language or previous experience. However, there is a clear set of rules that must be followed during work on the project.

II. *Preparation/“Casting”.*

In the so-called casting phase, initial rehearsals take place so that potential participants can come and try it out. After the announcements and presentations of the project, the detainees can officially register their interest in the project and apply for permission to take part. The final decision about whether they can take part in the project lies with the prisons, since there may be internal reasons that exclude participation in projects like this. In this phase, four to six rehearsals of four hours each take place. We do the first exercises and theatre games and have discussions about the content of the play planned and its themes, and the prisoners can express their ideas on this. They also do their first speech training and chorus exercises. We want the participants to get a comprehensive and realistic impression of the project, be able to articulate their own expectations and make a conscious decision about their participation. We also want to encourage openness for theatre and group work, but at the same time, demarcate the framework. The main aim is to get to know each other.

Since the theatre projects can be extremely intense and mean a huge intervention in the participants' everyday life in prison, they need to be prepared for this. The project involves around 300 h.

III. *Rehearsal phase.*

This is followed by the seven-week rehearsal phase; we rehearse four to five times a week for four to six hours each rehearsal. In principle, all participants are at every rehearsal. Participants can miss rehearsal for good reasons, but repeatedly missing rehearsal without being excused leads to exclusion from the group. It is very important to establish reliability from the beginning and to enforce sticking to agreements, since only this way can a group be created that is pursuing a goal, can deliver a professional result and be respected for their work. If problems arise, we try to convince prisoners of the purpose of the project in individual or group discussions and to motivate them to continue. A careful and intensive team-building process is essential in order to create the spirit of an ensemble, a trusting working atmosphere among participants, respectful behaviour and the fundamental ability to concentrate (developing basic personal and social competencies).

The structure of the rehearsal has many fixed, partly ritualised activities. There is an opening circle at the start, where we greet each other and any problems can be discussed. We try to shift the focus to problems related to the theatre work. Many problems such as lack of time to shower, not being collected on time from work, conflicts with fellow prisoners and prison staff have an immense influence on our work. We take participants' personal problems seriously too, but communicate to them that these problems should not be part of our work. In the subsequent warm-up, we switch over to theatre and seek to leave the reality of prison life aside from then on. A few movement elements and short games to wake up the body and reduce inhibitions are always on the schedule. Voice exercises take up a large part of the process and are an important way

of producing the physical requirements for a public stage appearance. Chorus training is a ritual part of every rehearsal: group work, group building and speech training are an important foundation for the growing production from the beginning. The choric texts must become flesh and blood; the chorus gives the whole group a sense of security on stage. The choruses are dissected in extreme and meticulous detail in terms of intonation, divisions, volume and high-points and trained using a large amount of repetition.

Rehearsing the scenes is divided into individual and group work. Here, the roles are allocated and built into the structure of the play. Individual talents are used, trained and developed further. Participants who are not in the particular scene being rehearsed can be kept occupied with practising their lines, individual pronunciation exercises or work on understanding the text with the aufBruch team. Writing workshops takes place in parallel in order to work on literary, linguistic and intellectual skills, or also to create new content for the play.

Songs and musical elements are always part of our productions, and a special movement training is also included for the choreographic elements.

In the closing circle, we evaluate the day of rehearsal, always with reference to what is coming next, which priorities are next on the list. After rehearsal, participants must independently learn their lines, songs and choric texts in their living areas.

Many prisoners who apply to take part in the project have very little interest in art at first and barely even any idea of what to expect. Most register to take part because they think it will help alleviate their boredom or because people they know or their sentence plan recommends participation in group projects. Perhaps it is also a certain curiosity or simply the hope for a few advantages and privileges during their sentence.

Individual resources and talents quickly become evident during the rehearsal process, and they start to try out unusual and new things. There is a great opportunity in this "implementation of ideas", because many prisoners are also imprisoned in their own thinking and overthinking. Rehearsal helps them to see themselves from a distance, to re-experience and re-evaluate themselves. The certainty that the prisoner will be respected as a person and for their creative work is essential. The issues of revealing oneself, sharing feelings, admitting weaknesses and exposing themselves to the risk of embarrassment or losing face in front of other prisoners also play a very important role.

In the later rehearsal process, there is an intensive and sustained learning of specific skills so the task of convincingly playing their role in the later production can be mastered (voice training/physical training/improvisation/writing exercises/choral singing, etc.). These skills are the result of tough training and demanding repetitions, for which the prisoners must motivate themselves (this practical participation in the real work of being a professional actor). For this, it is necessary to provide different and sometimes very individual frameworks, as well as to maintain a strict set of rules.

IV. *Performance phase.*

In the final stage of rehearsals, original props are introduced, and the set is continuously built during the rehearsal process and completed. We install professional theatre lighting and build platforms for the audience. The participants must learn to deal with the theatre equipment and are given a costume. Accepting their costume and their role, and to fill it, is often also laborious processes with lots of potential conflict.

There are six to fourteen public performances with 75–250 audience members per project. External audience members can buy tickets in our online shop or at the box office of the Volksbühne, a large state theatre in Berlin. Internal visitors must register their attendance in advance. Each prison carries out a security check. Every audience member is checked and searched when they enter the prison. Personal possessions, money, food, cigarettes and anything else similar must be locked away in lockers. Personal identification is swapped for a visitor's card. All visitors must follow the instructions of the prison staff (Photo 5.2).

The show's duration is between 70 and 150 min. Here, the participants experience (often for the first time in their lives) recognition and respect for their achievement from their social surroundings (family, friends, group leaders, theatre audience), the successful completion of the result of their work. These experiences strengthen their social competencies and change their perception of their own willingness and ability to achieve things.

Applause for an achievement is often a completely new life experience for our participants. The audience is often very enthusiastic about what performers



Photo 5.2 *Nebensonnen/Parhelions* (2013). (Source copyright Thomas Aurin, with permission to use the photos in the book)

have achieved—something they did not necessarily expect. This often allows the audience to forget that they are actually in a prison, which makes them give a very strong and exuberant applause.

After the shows, there is always a public audience talk, in which the performers and audience can talk directly to each other. The performers are given a direct response; the experience can be shared. The audience therefore gets a direct insight into the world and reality of life behind bars and prejudices can be deconstructed.

Talking to members of the press is also part of the process. Because of the large media interest, during the project, prisoners learn to more carefully and confidently deal with the media and its representatives. During these audience talks they can develop their skills in linguistic expression and the ability to reflect. They also learn that they do not have to answer every question. Protecting themselves and a reference to the just successfully complete theatre work usually divert the conversation away from an often voyeuristic and provocative media focus.

The shows in prisons are attended by an audience that is generally diverse and from many walks of life: Berlin theatregoers, the performers' relatives and friends, journalists, students and theatre professionals are all just as interested in the detainees' achievement as the prison staff, employees of the Berlin justice department and people who live beside the prisons or in the neighbourhood. The shows are almost always completely sold out. This form and this amount of openness and public presence is a completely new occurrence in modern prison history. The visit to the event is so much more than simply a voyeuristic look behind prison walls and barbed-wire fences. For many visitors, it represents their first encounter with the medium theatre too.

V. *Project evaluation.*

At the end of each project, we hold an evaluation event. The strengths and weaknesses are analysed and discussed. We watch the video of the show together, and many situations are relived and reflected upon (media and performance analysis). All press articles and notices are evaluated and discussed and talked about.

The participants receive certificates of participation, documenting the duration, intensity and specifics of the project and the skills and abilities they acquired therein.

There are group and individual talks on future projects and prospects on continuing to work together, also in productions outside the prison (developing future prospects). By closing the project with a celebration, we try to represent the significance of the project for each individual and to show our respect for the work done.

There are also cases of individual participants dropping out of the project, not continuing it to the end. However, that the majority of the actors stay and push themselves beyond their own limits can certainly not be taken for granted in prison. Again and again we hear statements like: *“This is the first time in my life I’ve ever finished something”* (Marcel, JSA Berlin 2016).

We have worked with many of our actors over a number of years, even after they are released from prison. The performers develop countless competencies and acquire a diverse range of skills in aufBruch projects. A significant portion of there is social skills, but professional skills and abilities are also acquired and trained. In order to improve the chances of participants' integration in society without committing crimes, these competencies are a very important building block. It remains difficult to provide certification of these skills, and there are few tools for it that have a relevant role and are recognised by the job market. Among other models, aufBruch uses the *Kompetenznachweis Kultur* (KNK or proof of qualification in culture)⁷ from the National Association of Cultural Education for Children and Youth (BKJ).⁸ The BKJ is the government's main expert partner for youth education and a member of the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH). The KNK was commissioned and funded by the Federal Ministry for Research and Culture. The KNK is an individual proof of education in the form of a portfolio. It documents in black and white strengths shown in cultural education work. It was developed in close collaboration with practitioners in cultural youth educational work, with scientists from competency research and representatives from business. The KNK consists of a meaningful description of artistic activity and the individual strengths of project participants demonstrated throughout. In the portfolio that belongs to it, documentation and results such as photos, CDs, DVDs or other items can be collected. The participant is involved in the creation of the certificate and is individually advised in this.

5.3.3 *Projects Outside Prison with Mixed Ensembles*

Once a year, aufBruch creates a high-profile theatre project somewhere in the city of Berlin with a 25 to 30 member mixed ensemble of ex-prisoners, prisoners on day or temporary release, professional actors and Berlin citizens in order to address current social debates and make them visible in public perception in a special way with exceptional projects and locations.

With aufBruch, most of the people on stage are people with a migration background, around a third of the performers do not have a German passport. The ensemble represents the demographic reality of the city of Berlin, where immigration has such a strong influence. The focus on aufBruch's multi-cultural ensemble from many different class backgrounds is an essential factor in artistically shaping the statements of the productions. It is decisive for the relevance and public presence of the shows, which are seen as exemplary intercultural and integrative work in the city of Berlin.

⁷Cultural competence record, an educational passport for young people/Kompetenznachweis Kultur, Ein Bildungspass für Jugendliche, www.kompetenznachweiskultur.de.

⁸Federal Association of Cultural Child and Youth Education/Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle Kinder- und Jugendbildung (BKJ) e. V.

In the encounter between various social and cultural groups, the mixture of different actors consistently continues aufBruch's social integration work begun in the prisons. Uniting this diversity of personalities and characters from different social backgrounds in one artistic project is novel and unique—in Berlin and all over Germany. The outside projects enable the prisoners to continue to develop their creative potential after release and make it easier to involve them in new structures alternative to their usual milieu.

In the context of its external productions, aufBruch has cooperated with the German–Russian Museum in Berlin Karlshorst, the Museum Island in Berlin Mitte, the Wall Memorial in Bernauer Straße, St Johannis Church in Moabit and the former airport Berlin Tempelhof.

5.4 International Work and European Projects

Across Europe, aufBruch is considered one of the most professional prison theatre projects and is a permanent member of the European Prison Arts Network, whose aim it is to get to know each other's European partners through discussion and communication and to learn from each other through exchange.

In this function, aufBruch was invited to Santiago in Chile to represent all the European groups in 2010 and produce a complete play in a Chilean men's prison there. In return, in July 2011, aufBruch organised an international symposium for prison theatre with a special emphasis on the exchange and encounter between Europe and Latin America. In cooperation with the International Theatre Institute ITI Germany and the Instituto Cervantes, we invited the most important people working in prison theatre from Latin America and Europe to a five-day meeting in Berlin to publicly discuss the methods, ways of working and prospects of prison theatre.

In the project ERASMUS+“PROVA—Prevention of Violent Radicalisation and of Violent Actions in Intergroup Relations” (PROVA 2016–2018), we pursued the goal of finding effective working approaches and methods, especially artistic ones, to work against radicalisation in prisons and youth work, as well as deconstructing the differences between society and prison, and spreading model projects more widely in society.

For this purpose, workshop formats were specially developed with young people, in which they were brought in group processes and norms and values in society were questioned and discussed. Especially through playful work and active dealing with the issue of radicalisation, many adolescent detainees could be addressed and bridges built back into society. Artistic model workshops as preventive measures were integrated into the procedures in the prisons to prevent tendencies of radicalisation.

aufBruch is a leading partner in European network and research projects and therefore also contributes to spreading the art form of prison theatre and the special artistic aesthetic of those involved to the wider public. The aim of aufBruch's international activities is to present the methods tried and tested in Germany in European

and international contexts, to promote international networks and strengthen cross-regional relationships in order to develop additional cooperative projects, workshops and close, productive communication structures in the European and international contexts as a result.

5.4.1 Workshops in Prisons

In prisons where theatre projects on this scale cannot be produced, artistic workshops are run instead (JVA Moabit, juvenile prison Berlin, juvenile arrest centre Berlin, JVA for women, open prison). The spectrum of workshops offered is broad. aufBruch is increasingly offering wide-ranging artistic, creative workshops in Berlin's prisons and correctional institutions, often in cooperation with other artists, institutions or artistic disciplines. Thus, we have produced publications in the literature workshops, songs and CDs in hip-hop workshops and entire documentary films and actors' show-reels in film projects. In 2018, more than 300 prisoners attended these workshops, which were offered in all seven Berlin correctional facilities. A few examples of these workshops are described below:

Camera Acting Workshop/a Workshop in Front of and Behind the Camera/Juvenile Prison Berlin

The camera acting workshops facilitated by a documentary filmmaker aimed to give the detainees a feeling for working with film. The course took place three times a week. Over six weeks, the eight participants were carefully introduced to responsibly dealing with their own and others' effect in front of the camera. They were also able to experiment with light and the camera and learned to use the microphone.

Using many different improvisation and association exercises, they discovered their own expressive ability and therefore the conscious use of gesture and facial expression. They were then asked to learn dialogues and monologues from selected film scenes and to practise reliability and self-control as acting partners. These "show-reels" can be used by the prisoners after release as audition films when applying to production companies for small parts or as extras.

Furthermore, during the workshops, the prisoners also worked on their job prospects by shooting job application videos for possible training positions. They presented their interest in the specific training position in front of the camera and highlighted their own qualifications.

After the workshop's facilitators spent a few weeks of cutting and editing all the film material, both the job application clips and the show-reels by all the participants were presented in a final event for staff and prisoners invited from the prison and an external audience.

"Here Time Becomes Space"/Sound Workshop in JVA Tegel

In November 2017, aufBruch organised a sound workshop in cooperation with musicians from the Berlin Philharmonic orchestra and opera singer Judith Kamphues in

Tegel prison. The goal of the workshop was to make the medium “music” accessible to inmates of the prison, give them a feeling for rhythm, explore their singing voices and give them their first insights into various facets and forms of different musical disciplines.

In rotating groups, the prisoners had the opportunity to try out different percussion instruments and to get to know their own “instrument”, their voice. In varied activities, they were also taught basic knowledge of choral singing and percussion. In order to make it easier for inmates to access this “unfamiliar” medium, there were always various different exercises available, so that everyone could get involved depending on their personal talents and preferences.

First, a fundamental understanding and feeling for metre, tempo, rhythms and musical interaction was built up in playful group exercises. The next step was to introduce them to the different percussion instruments from the philharmonic orchestra, through which the prisoners had the chance to try out their previously learned feel for rhythm on instruments. Very soon, the groups tried and worked on different small pieces, and then later in the workshop, the prisoners learned and practised a rhythmic concert piece.

The singing classes began with various breathing and voice exercises, intended to give the prisoners a feeling for their own body, their own presence and the sound of their own voice. Building on this, they first learned simple melodies from folk songs, which they then sung in rounds divided into small groups. At the end of the workshop, the prisoners manage to learn and present complicated choral pieces from Richard Wagner’s opera “Parsifal” as a choir.

Out of Nothing/JVA Moabit

The aufBruch writing workshop in Moabit prison, facilitated by renowned writer Marian Leky, takes place once a year. A group of prisoners meets twice a week over three months to transform their thoughts into words. Using a wide range of writing exercises, they created diverse biographical accounts and imagined stories. The aim is also to overcome language barriers, spoken and written. A large amount of sensitivity and patience is therefore required of the group. The participants were supportive of each other without exception, so that everyone had the chance to express themselves in their own words or sometimes in their own native language. Thanks to dedicated help and after consulting with the authors, aufBruch translated Bosnian and French texts into German so that the content could be best understood by everyone.

Hip-Hop Workshop/Women’s Prison

The hip-hop projects run by the rapper Aisha aka Lady Scar take place continuously in the JVA Lichtenberg. Every Tuesday evening, interested women meet to write creative lyrics, work on different beats and practise their own songs. The participants chose two themes to work on: “angel on the right, devil on the left” and “Mama”. The group then created songs out of the lyrics, which were then professionally recorded. The decision to present the songs at the JVA Lichtenberg summer party brought a new, special challenge in this workshop. This meant additional rehearsals, in which the participants were coached in their stage performance twice a week.

At the end of the workshop, the participants were given their own CD.

Fundamental artistic skills are also learned in the workshops; teamwork and acceptance are the basis of the work. In this area too, intense and moving elements of artistic expression are created or revealed.

5.5 Specific Features

Through theatre work in prison and the combination of the freedom of art and the highly regulated procedures in prison, it is natural that friction occurs and occasionally paradoxical situations. The prisoner can be in the situation that they feel like they are “advertising” for the prison with their work, since they would never have had the opportunity to get involved in theatre elsewhere. Especially when members of the prison management or representatives of the senate attend the shows, these thoughts cross their mind.

By playing special roles, certain individuals become indispensable for the production, and in some cases, participants have tried to use this against us. It has happened that participants then provoked confrontations and pulled out of the project at a late stage. However, because all participants are almost always at all rehearsals, many of them know other people’s lines to a certain extent, and often passages or even entire roles can be quickly redistributed and taken over, compensating for the missing actor.

It must also be taken into consideration that all our work contains risks and potentially undesirable effects. For example, with people with strong psychopathic characteristics, there is the risk that they will adopt therapeutic strategies using their manipulative talent, make them their own and use them for endangering others. Through close cooperation with the responsible staff in the prisons, we try to minimise and stop these effects.

Generally, we work from the standpoint of a critical view of prison and imprisonment, but working in partnership with the prisons is also very important for the work. Prison staff should be involved as much as possible, and their criticism should be taken seriously. Any resentment usually disappears as soon as a certain level of participation and understanding of the work is made possible. We also try to find compromises as solutions and implement them in cooperation with departments that are orientated towards an oppositional attitude towards the fundamentally liberal idea of theatre, such as the security department.

The prison management fundamentally values our work. It is of course nonetheless the case that new and unfamiliar things in prison are either rejected, assimilated or mitigated by “the system’s own immune system”. Various parties question the point of projects like these. Theatre is often portrayed as a luxury good or reward, along with the question of why prisoners should perform theatre or be allowed to “on top of everything else”. The deconstruction of the role of the “prisoner as criminal” is viewed critically, since it contradicts the logic of the system, which defines various roles within the system. Added to this are the difficulties regarding requirements on all resources. Time, rooms, additional work and financial resources are the main

points. The prisons often do not have any suitable rooms. The risk that other activities like sport (when using sports halls or because of additional supervision) could be restricted creates significant conflicts. However, in several prisons, we were able to find creative solutions, such as performing in unused outdoor spaces or empty prison wings waiting to be renovated or demolished. From outside the prison, we are often criticised for our work only taking the perpetrator into account and not the victim. But of course, fostering learning and development processes in criminals are also a contribution to reducing the risk of repeat offenders and can be seen as a preventative measure that benefits all of society.

Teamwork in the group of external team members is the basis for a successful project. Every single team member must be briefed, instructed and be clear about what their role is. The team members must be able to deal with any emotions that come up, conflict situations, increased impulsiveness and aggression and addiction problems. The work in both directions, with the prisoners and the prison staff, must be carried out with authenticity. There are team meetings and rehearsal evaluations every day, in which problems and situations that have arisen are discussed and solved.

In the project, the performers acquire a series of personal, social and methodical competencies. Taking on various roles, the experience of working in a group being exposed to the medium of art as a form of aesthetic education addresses a wide range of learning and development levels. Processes of self-reflection can change fundamental attitudes. Emotions can come up, and thereby, inner conflicts can be overcome; the cathartic effect of theatre acting can take place. Alternatives to habitual actions can be developed, and problem-solving competence and the ability to empathise can be trained. Moral and ethical questions are discussed during the rehearsal, and new patterns of behaviour can be assimilated into daily practice in their lives.

Why are there people in the world who betray others to gain advantages for themselves? It happened to me too, but because I started to consume what I was selling. That made me start to make mistakes that other people used to gain advantage. They thought, now he's weak and gone totally stupid. They did it to protect themselves. But I tell myself, people like that have no value and no honour. I thought about doing the same thing myself, but that's not the way I am. (Khaled, JSA Berlin 2017)

In projects like these, the prisoners experience that they can reach a certain goal. The audience's response also contributes to a better image of themselves. Through the physical and mental activity, their general health also improves. The participants learn to contribute, work together and also to hold back. Conflicts must be withstood and solved constructively.

The situation after the run of shows is frequently difficult—after the applause and a final discussion, the team leaves the prison. The performers are thrown back into everyday life in prison, which can cause strong mood swings. After the end of the project, a long time often passes before the next project with a similar intensity is about to begin.

5.6 Effects/Evaluation

Besides the fact that the prisoners' development is positively influenced by the theatre work, there are also effects on society. Society must further develop its readiness to reintegrate criminals and work against stigmatisation. Resocialisation is always a two-way process. The theatre projects can enable a new view of prisoners. Prison staff who have supervised the rehearsals too had a positive perception of the high levels of discipline and concentration demanded from participants during rehearsals and their motivation and commitment.

The public shows in prison also work against the tendency for the media to distort prison and prisoners. The institution of prison has opened itself to theatre and therefore also new concepts, forms and methods of treatment.

Parallel to aufBruch's work and other projects in German prisons, there is also a wide range of established qualification models and methods in the European context that enable criminals to reintegrate back into society. These approaches and methods are by now the subject of complex scientific research areas (applied theatre studies) and have been successfully evaluated several times (Geese, Anger Management an Offender Behaviour, Applied Theatre).

aufBruch was professionally evaluated by UNIVATON (2017).

Some excerpts from the Evaluation Report are quoted hereafter:

“Central to aufBruch's artistic approach is working with original plays as the basis for the work and that a rough plan of the process has already been made at the start of rehearsals. Depending on the participants' commitment and how prepared they are to take on roles and develop them further or to integrate other forms of expression into the play, the rough plan is developed further and adapted.

In this process, worlds collide with each other, namely the institution of prison, which represents sanction and the loss of freedom, and theatre as an art form that strives for freedom. The theatre thereby occupies a space that is otherwise devoid of art.[...].

In ideal cases, aufBruch manages to inspire initial basic interest for the play in the participants with a theme that is orientated towards their actual lives. This exploration of a theme encourages self-reflection. ... The working relationship established by the project team, which is characterised by high standards, resource orientation and mutual respect, motivates the participants to dedicated work on the project. Furthermore, motivation is encouraged by the fact that the project team recognises and uses the participants' interests and talents for adapting the play. After successfully completing the rehearsals, the participants manage to perform the play as a product of their work. They are proud of their teamwork and therefore also more confident in their own ability to work in a team. They experience recognition from an external audience, which increases their self-esteem. Last but not least, the participants develop their artistic potential and discover new interests and talents. They therefore leave the process with an increased interest in theatre and art.

Participants can show another side of themselves and therefore improve their relationship to the prison staff. One prison staff member reported that she now uses

her observations of the participants during the theatre project as a prognosis for their further development.

Another effect in terms of the institution of prison, according to the prison staff we questioned, was that people in the audience are given a more realistic image of prison—beyond horror scenarios—meaning that prison staff are also given positive feedback and overall public perception of the institution is improved by the fact that pre-existing negative expectations of the audience are not fulfilled”.

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Holger Syrbe, Manager, Stage Designer, Visual Artist, has many productions in various state theatres and exhibitions in various galleries. He founded aufBruch in 1997. Artistic director, stage designer and technical director in all prison theatre projects of aufBruch, and leader of its International Department, involved in many European projects and conferences for developing workshop models for artistic projects in prisons.