

Press release from the Haus für Poesie

18.6.2021

The 22nd poesiefestival berlin has been celebrating the poetry of Europe online

The online edition of the **22nd poesiefestival berlin** (11–17 June) came to a successful conclusion yesterday evening. With the motto **There Lies Europe**, the Festival presented an extensive digital programme of readings, talks, discussions, concerts and workshops on the Festival website poesiefestival.org featuring 150 artists from around 40 countries. Taking centre place in this year's edition of the Festival was the poetry of Europe, which was taken as a prism for examining the political, cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe in an ambivalent way, finding its pain points and searching for what connects us in diversity.

Klaus Lederer, Senator for Culture and Europe of the State of Berlin, opened the Festival on Friday with a filmed word of welcome. He said, "I do not understand the title of the Festival as just a reference to content, to mean that this year is about looking closely at the multi-lingualism of Europe, but also as the identifying mark of a Festival, a temporal place where people originating from different places can come together, where exchange is made possible by translating texts and we are able to learn about each other, about contemporary poetry and much more."

Barbara Gessler, Head of Unit Creative Europe with the European Commission, made a plea in her word of welcome for "not threatening identities but enriching and enlarging them, not unifying arts and culture but facilitating discussion of their differences, discovering what they have in common and growing together in this diversity."

For **Weltklang – Night of Poetry**, the opening of the Festival in many voices, poets from all parts of the world read and performed in their native languages: Ichiko Aoba (JPN), Ben Lerner (USA), Hannah Lowe (GBR), Valzhyna Mort (BLR/USA), Chus Pato (Galicien, ESP), Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (NLD), Marko Tomaš (BIH), Peter Waterhouse (AUT) and Judith Zander (DEU).

On Saturday, the **Forum**, with the title **Europe's diversity has no skin**, took Europe's wealth of languages as its starting point for approaching the cultural, social and political reality of the continent from a linguistic perspective. In his lecture, **Can Dündar** argued for a positive interpretation of Europe's multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism and voiced his expectation of the culture industry that "Everyone working in the creative sector has a responsibility. This effort can show that a development that looks like a problem is actually an opportunity for differences not to shatter the Earth but quite the opposite, to enrich it. It can contain the fears existing in society and turn political self-isolation around into an opening up to the outside world. It can create a Europe of

mixed identities.” The discussion afterwards was about ambivalence in Europe’s wealth of languages and translation tasks for the EU. To conclude, poets from ‘small’ languages read their poetry and talked about the relationship of their languages to the ‘big’ languages.

Particular attention was paid in this edition of the Festival to Europe’s **Language Archipelagos**. The multi-lingualism in five European regions – Spain, former Yugoslavia, the Baltic, Romania and the region around the Caspian Sea – were focused on in five events from the perspectives of language policy and language nationalism, identity and poetry traditions.

On Saturday evening, the artists **Mira Mann** (DEU) and **Rosaceae** (DEU) presented their audio-visual works. Both artists work aesthetically as well as in terms of their content with boundaries, figurations of resistance and tonal aspects of the most various dominance structures. Mira Mann introduced her single ‘Atlantic City’ (a German-language interpretation of the Springsteen song) and ‘Schau mich an’ (Look At Me), the title song from her EP of the same name. Rosaceae presented three songs from her new album ‘DNA’, which is due for release in August.

The **Berlin Poetry Lecture** was given this year by the Berlin poet and artist Johannes Jansen. In his Lecture, entitled ‘Ergebnis einer Isolation’ (Outcome of an Isolation), Jansen outlined a poetics of the state of emergency in 34 prose miniatures. The Lecture was published simultaneously by Wallstein Verlag in the German original and an English translation by Shane Anderson.

Curated by the writer Fiston Mwanza Mujila from an idea by the Haus für Poesie, an anthology featuring 33 Black European poets in German translation is being published in Summer 2021 by the publisher Wunderhorn Verlag. Four of them – Johannes Anyuru (SWE), Radna Fabias (NLD), Roger Robinson (GBR) and Victoria Adukwei Bulley (GBR) – and editor Fiston Mwanza Mujila (AUT) came together in the Festival in an event entitled **Unheard Poetry: Black Europe** for a discussion of poetry and the meaning of being Black. The project is also making its way to the UK with Bloodaxe Press. Publishers in other countries have also expressed their interest.

The Belarusian-German translation workshop **VERSchmuggel** brought together six Belarusian poets and six German-language poets who translated each other in Zoom sessions with the assistance of gloss translations and language mediators and gave an insight in the Festival of their work together. Especially in view of the current political situation in Belarus, it seems more important than ever to intensify bilateral relations on levels other than the political. The Belarusian poet Dmitri Strozev said about his experiences in the workshop, “As an artist, as a translator, there’s no getting round the fact that I find it hard not to transfer on to the work of another writer what most deeply moves me: my concern, my unease, the way I experience the Belarusian catastrophe.”

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In **Queer-Bodied Voices** the poets Jay Bernard (GBR), Eduard Escoffet (ESP), Judith Kiros (SWE), Jacek Dehnel (POL), Anna Hetzer (DEU) and Ricardo Domeneck (BRA) talked about bodies, poetry and identity – in view of the fact that in many countries of Europe acceptance of non-heteronormative sexualities and identities is increasing, while political and social discrimination are on the rise in others and elsewhere.

In the area of **Poetic Education** a number of workshops for children, young people and poetry disseminators took place, as well as the closing readings by the 25 young poets from the young poems and open poems poetry workshops. From the beginning of June to the end of the Festival, guests also had the chance to work together on writing a collective chain poem on the subject of **There Lies Europe: Edition 2031**. The result was posted on the Festival website.

Wrapping up the Festival was the **Poets' Evening #8: Communion of the Absent**, a performance curated by Yoko Tawada. In an installation by the artist Chiharu Shiota (JPN/DEU) the poets Yoko Tawada (JPN/DEU), Marion Poschmann (DEU), Ursula Krechel (DEU), Ulf Stolterfoht (DEU) and Jan Wagner (DEU) read their work. Musicians responded to this poetry and interacted with it so that the art forms that were separated in the pandemic could come back together again for the conclusion of the Festival.

The full Festival programme will stay online at poesiefestival.org, where 70 written interviews, anthology contributions and essays can be downloaded free of charge. The video productions are accessible via a paywall. Tickets priced € 3 and Festival Passes priced just € 19 will give you access to the productions for another two months.

As an analogue part of the Festival, **Poets' Corner, Literaturexpress Europa – Re:Writing a Myth** and the **Labo(r)Labé chanson concert** with Agnès Guipont and the **lyrix-prize awards** will be taking place in September 2021.

FRI 11.6.– THU 17.6.2021
22nd poesiefestival berlin: There Lies Europe
online at poesiefestival.org

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