



*A mythopoetic dramaturgy of diversity: Schauspiel Dortmund's 2025 production of Antigone, directed by Ariane Kareev. Akasha Daley as seer Tiresias, confronting the ruler of Thebes, Creon (Ekkehard Freye, sitting on the stairs at the back), surrounded by the members of the theatre's ensemble of Dortmund citizen, who here perform the play's Chorus, in miners' work uniforms and other historical dresses as revenants of the local past.*

# Learning from Schauspiel Dortmund about Diversity and Inclusion in Theatre Production

Images for Towards an “Archipelagic Dramaturgy”

By Peter M. Boenisch

## Abstract

*Denne artikel undersøger Schauspiel Dortmund under Julia Wissert og sætter fokus på mangfoldighed og inklusion som del af en pluralistisk teaterpoetik. I artiklen analyseres ressourcefordeling med post-repræsentationelle begreber inspireret af Paul Carter, og en “arkipelagisk dramaturgi”, der skifter fokus fra identitet til værdier, rum og møder, diskuteres.*

*This article examines Schauspiel Dortmund under Julia Wissert, focusing on diversity and inclusion as part of a pluralistic theatre poetics. It analyzes resource distribution using post-representational concepts inspired by Paul Carter, and it considers an “archipelagic dramaturgy” shifting focus from identity to values, spaces, and encounters.*

## keywords

*archipelagic dramaturgy, production practices, post-representational dramaturgy, poetics of plurality*

The most memorable moment in Ariane Kareev’s 2025 production of *Antigone* at Schauspiel Dortmund was, for me, the confrontation between Creon and Tiresias. The wise seer challenging the ruler’s verdict was here not the even older white man speaking with the authority of tradition, age, and the past. Akasha Daley, British physical theatre-performer and spoken word-artist, and since 2023 a member of the theatre’s ensemble, embodied this character of personified knowing who is compelled to speak the truth through fluent movement and using an oratory poetry-slam-mix of German and English words that gave the Sophoclean verse, adapted from Roland Schimmelpfennig’s translation, the sharpness of a penetrating weapon. Her portrayal afforded Tiresias’s speech with foreboding warnings from an as-yet-to-be future, making the scene resonant with contemporary critique of the ‘old white male’ tyranny, embodied here by Ekkehard Freye’s Creon with emphasised echoes of the likes of Donald Trump and German right-wing chancellor Friedrich Merz. With Daley’s casting, the production short-circuited the narrative semiotics of Greek mythology with the visual and embodied delivery of Black Afrofuturist myth-making. The performer’s age, gender

and skin colour, inevitably marked still on a German stage, countered normative expectations of conventional representation, recoding the identity markers of difference into signs of different ethics and alternative actions within the frame of the dramatic action.

The scene encapsulates core values of Schauspiel Dortmund's extensive attention to diversity, accessibility and inclusion that characterises the work of Julia Wissert (b. 1984), since 2020 the theatre's artistic director as first Black German theatre *Intendant*. Making diverse theatre here no longer means turning diversity and inclusion into a drama, confined to 'special' forms and genres. Instead, it becomes the resource facilitating different "world-making" on stage, as Dorinne Kondo describes it: Showing, as in the Tiresias-scene, "visions of possibility, a suggestion, however fleeting, of a world imagined otherwise, so that we might attempt to remake the world accordingly, even as the world makes us" (Kondo 2018, 91). Inspired by Schauspiel Dortmund's innovations, this essay seeks to shift the focus of diversity debates from questions of "participation" and "audience development" towards the development of diverse and inclusive modes of theatre production. I propose to consider diversity and accessibility as a question not of people, but of poetics – understood, following Janek Szatkowski (2019), as the aesthetic and ethic values that form the basis for creative decisions in a production process. My discussion will connect observations at Schauspiel Dortmund<sup>1</sup> to the "archipelagic dramaturgy" of Australian urban design-artist Paul Carter and his central principles of choreotopography and mythopoetics. My intention here is not the detailed analyses of specific projects, but an attempt to think with, and think beyond, this exemplary production work towards a future theatre poetics of plurality that embeds diversity and accessibility as integral dimensions into theatre production, whether at an established institution, in the free field or the educational classroom.

## Beyond postmigrant openings: From a diversity of people to a poetics of plurality

The need for increased sensitivity has become widely felt across the theatre field. Previously engaging with homogenous audiences and representing the capital of high culture and civic *Bildung*, theatre today is confronted with a greatly diversified social plurality, characterised by what sociologist Andreas Reckwitz (2020) describes as "singularised" interests and identities that all compete for attention and representation in our globalised culture connected by social media. While television reinvented itself as on-demand-service catering for this new multiplicity of tastes, cultures, preferences and self-fashioning, new theatre audiences still often experience what Kondo describes as 'affective violence' of not being meant, or being represented as an object put on display and talked about on other people's terms (Kondo 2018, 16-22). Certainly, a lot has changed over the past decade through the impulses that emerged from so-called 'postmigrant theatre', programmatically pioneered at Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theater under the artistic direction of Shermin Langhoff since 2013. She promoted this label for the work of theatre artists of second- and

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1) The project *Reconfiguring dramaturgy for a global culture: Changing practices in 21st century European theatre*, funded by Aarhus University's Research Foundation AUFF, analysed transformational work at institutional theatres in Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Portugal and Germany, including Schauspiel Dortmund.

third generation migrational background, coming to include also artists with their own migrant history, whether hailing from the former Soviet Union, the 1990s wars in former Yugoslavia, or more recently the Syrian civil war after 2015, as the Gorki Theater created its 'Exile Ensemble' for refugee artists from the region. The inclusion of these artists in the repertoire and ensemble of this city theatre institution in the country's capital bestowed visibility and cultural legitimacy to previously absent stories and histories as well as to a greater variety of aesthetic forms, including the mixing of languages on stage (Garde 2022; Sharifi 2023). It had transformative effects on the composition of the repertoire and of ensembles across the country. The international prominence of the Gorki theatre's 'postmigrant'-brand also brought into view similar efforts in other countries, which had even predated the innovations at Berlin, for instance at the Royal Flemish Theatre (KVS) in Brussels and Unga Klara in Stockholm (Dienderen, Janssens and Smits 2007; Gindt, Rosenberg and Brinch 2022; Boenisch 2022a).

Eventually, though, 'postmigrant theatre' turned into a new form of cultural capital, replicating divides of privilege and exclusion now within more diverse artist and audience communities (Sharifi 2019; Stewart 2021). Becoming a near synonym for diversity in theatre, the term furthermore reduced the focus onto migrant identities and ethnic difference alone. Sociologist Naika Foroutan meanwhile applies the term of 'postmigrant' not only to the culture of migrants and their descendants, but the entire German (and wider European) society, seeking to capture with it the encompassing effects of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century migration movements on contemporary culture at large, from theatre to music, food and other layers of everyday culture (Foroutan 2021; Schramm e.a. 2019). Wissert's work at Schauspiel Dortmund speaks to such an extended concept of societal plurality beyond cultural difference. She not only brought together a new ensemble that includes actors of (post-)migrant background, of colour and from abroad for whom German is not the first language, but also attends in the theatre's programming to gender, class, physical and cognitive ability, age, as well as their intersectional entanglements. She introduced three now annual festivals, dedicated to feminism, queer culture and to people of colour, which have become impactful platforms for wide community engagement and for local performative work from drag shows to spoken word poetry, which else would not find exposure on a city theatre stage. Wissert also made the mixed-ability collective *I Can Be Your Translator* that had been active in the region since 2012 an associated house company, and recently put efforts into accessibility for hearing-impaired audiences.

Above all, her efforts at Schauspiel Dortmund tackle diversity and inclusion not just through the extension of the stories and characters depicted on stage, but at the various institutional layers that Sabrina Vitting-Seerup has named onstage, backstage, offstage and "patrons of the stage" (2017, 50 ff.). Wissert's infrastructural poetics of plurality focus on what the director of Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures), Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, calls the "intrinsic" layers of institutions: "diversification MUST be reflected in their projects, their public, and their personnel" (2020, 185; orig. emphasis). Only then, he asserts, will attempts at diversity exceed tokenistic reflexes to policy and funding incentives. Such intrinsic shifts, though, provoke uncomfortable challenges, as the case of Schauspiel Dortmund also revealed (Wissert

2024; Boenisch 2025). These conflicts make evident how the creative environment (not only) of a city theatre institution brings together human and material actants in ways that are defined and also confined by systemic organisational structures: These often implicit norms, values and conventions of production delimit what is *really* possible beyond declarations of intent, which decisions can be taken, and what worlds can be made at all. Still, many, if not most, discussions of diversity, accessibility and inclusion concentrate on people, tending to overlook these systemic conditions that in so many ways determine possible action in the first place. I therefore suggest to add to Ndikung's layers of projects, public and personnel the crucial further 'Ps' of *practices and poetics*: Poetics are, following Szatkowski, normative micro-systems of values that define the creative acts of *poiesis*, based on key assumptions what theatre should do, and what it should look like, when society is at it is (Szatkowski 2019, 87).

Importantly, the poetic process is recursive, as Szatkowski stresses: not only find values their articulation in production practices – conversely, actions and modes of doing and creating likewise transform underlying values, and by extension challenge and reshape organisational practices as well as an institution's wider structural poetics. This principle of poetic recursivity inspires the practical approach towards diversity and accessibility I propose here, especially in those production contexts that as yet lack opportunities to include a diverse group of people: Instead of using this as reason to further defer attempts to diversify theatre work to a future day, one can and should start from a poetics of plurality. The fundamental poetic dynamics are the crucial driver towards realising a greater plurality of perspectives, and hence also to eventually engage and include more diverse artists and audiences. The responsibility for access and diversity cannot be delegated to artists identifying, or forced to identify, with a minoritarian position alone – and thus to *people*. It starts from a *poetics* of plurality and the resulting *practices*, and this makes such considerations a responsibility for any production. But where to start, then?

## Beyond depiction: From representation to resource

Characteristically for investigations of diversity in theatre, Vitting-Seerup emphasizes “the complexity and importance of the problem of skewed representation” (2017, 45). It is indeed here where many deliberations begin. Norms and conventions of representation – this act of ‘standing in’ for something or someone – underpin artistic expression (see the pioneering work in Cultural Analysis by Hall [1997] 2024 and Bal 1996): Before shaping the dramaturgy of a narrative, representational norms already afforded the power to tell *this* story (instead of *that* which remains untold), and they define the perspective from which it will be told: in the terms of Cultural Analysis, they bestow an “expository agency”. It finds its correspondence in an implied audience who is addressed, for instance, by the humour or references in a production: the act of “focalisation”. Representational norms thus frame the semiotic meaning of the plays produced on stage, making the stories and characters put on stage ‘stand in’ for something bigger that creates cultural belonging, asserts identity (both for producers and audiences), and thereby fashions a self with which one identifies, as well as a community to which one considers belonging. These largely implicit representational



frames of exposition and focalisation determine understanding and interpretation; they define what is perceived as normal and natural, what is marked as different, and what remains excluded from the range of possibilities, not even considered.

In Stuart Hall's classical analyses dating from the 1970s and 80s, the assumption was that of a (White, middle-class) majority dominating these representational regimes through high art and mass media, and of minoritarian groups creating dissident and subversive subcultures to create their visibility and representation. In today's world of social media, though, we are surrounded by an overabundance of representation, with too many voices and too many images all broadcast at the same time. Theatre, meanwhile, is no longer a central agent of representation as in the bourgeois national 'high theatre art' of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and hence has acquired a subcultural potential: Instead of affirming dominant values, it can play with the conventional representational markers and challenge systems of visibility and meaning-making. To make a claim for participation and representation in the medium of theatre, therefore, has turned into the demand for inclusion in the one privileged cultural space that allows in its world-making for the performative capacity of 'unmarking' that Peggy Phelan (1993) famously discussed in the context of feminist performance. As a medium, theatre makes such playful imagination and alternative representation directly available – intellectually but above all viscerally and affectively – to the audiences' experience.

The earlier example of Daley's Tiresias offers an example for such representational un-marking. The 'Otherness' of the actor's gender and skin colour gets to signify something other than that of Black female identity. 'Diversity in theatre' hence becomes about something other than theatre *about* diversity that effectively furthers the othering of difference by dramatising and spectacularising otherness, as in all these cases of a black performer 'giving voice to' the plight of being Black in a racist society, of 'making visible' differing abilities through performers with different abilities performing these on stage, or of 'offering the stage' to a trans-character in a play, who lives through the drama of their transition. At Schauspiel Dortmund, black, queer, diverse and differently abled theatre-makers produce work other than (even in the still largely representational approach of postmigrant theatre) semi-biographical or autofictional pieces about their identity. Much rather, their identity, as for any unmarked position of enunciation, becomes the (back-) ground for the expression of existential dramatic conflicts, as in the clash between Tiresias and Creon. Another Dortmund production, the stage adaptation of *Schwindel* (the German word means both deceit and vertigo in English), a novel by non-binary writer Hengameh Yaghoobifarah, presented a group of non-binary characters in a relationship comedy that did not foreground their trans, lesbian and bisexual identities, but dramatized the fear of committing to a single relationship and partner, as protagonist Ava (again played by Daley) is faced with the accidental simultaneous arrival in her apartment of all three of her current love affairs.

On the level of curation, such un-marking of difference finds its evidence in some of Schauspiel Dortmund's programming decisions: As Linda Fisahn, a director with Down Syndrome, was invited to produce Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the performance was not framed as inclusive community project, but shown in the regular repertoire, just as the theatre's youth company has its work included in the main programme. In accordance with Wissert's ambition to demonstrate

the significance of a city theatre for the entire city community, difference thus shifts from being a marker to becoming a facilitator of encounter, resonance, and commonality: Plurality is embraced as a resource. Instead of asking for identification with a trans, black or differently abled character, the representational act of ‘standing in’ makes available potentially multi-focal positions in an unmarked dramatic situation, such as the fear of committing to a relationship, the courage to speak in the face of tyrannic politicians, or the lacking happy end in the love story of Romeo and Juliet. This invites a further nuance to the productive differentiation introduced by Vitting-Seerup, of representation as depiction and representation as access (2017, 51). Where diversity remains at the level of depiction only, it (often) fails to re-mark conventions of exposition and focalisation and replicates or even adds to exclusion and Othering (see also Conroy 2019 for the complex case of a mixed ability production of *Bernarda Alba’s House* by British company Graeae).



*Diversity as resource, not as exposed drama: Hurra, Romeo und Julia! – Die Szene mit der Leiche, die habe ich gelöscht (Hooray, Romeo and Juliet! The scene with the corpses we deleted), Schauspiel Dortmund’s version of Shakespeare’s classic, directed by Linda Fisahn, with the associated mixed-ability company I Can Be Your Translator: Christian Fleck, Lis Marie Diehl, Christoph Rodatz, Laurens Wältken, Ekkehard Freye, director*

A genuinely diverse production practice seeks to connect on equal terms the resource of theatre with the resource of difference. Playing with representational regimes, it performatively asserts the universal availability of human drama, of affects and dramatic situations, instead of dramatising otherness. It thereby extends through poetic means the privileged, unmarked position of representational agency, including wider, more diverse groups within the frames of exposition and focalisation. Vitting-Seerup understands her term “representation as access” somewhat pragmatically as physical access. Adding here the layer of “representation as resource” helps to further emphasise the systemic (organisational, institutional as well as representational) dimension of access and to stress the *poetic* in addition to the practical dimension of inclusion. ‘Resource’ comes to stand for the representational openness beyond depiction (hence, again, beyond a focus on ‘people’ and their identities) that provides a space for embodiment and enactment without marking, or at least without further emphasising the societal marking. The experience of appearing and being seen, of being counted in and of belonging, which representational exposition and focalisation allows for, becomes a retrospective *effect* of the performance, instead of serving as identitarian prerequisite in order to have an authority to speak, be shown and also watch in the first place. Accessibility and inclusion start with such a resource-ful poetics that uses the representational dynamics of ‘standing in’ in order to widen representational fixtures, inserting an elastic porosity of un-marked and re-marked positions of agency, enunciation and spectatorship. They become the vessel for a more diverse, multiple, even incommensurate plurality of perspectives on and in a shared dramatic (tragic or comic) conflict: the drama that, in terms of Rancière’s logic of emancipation becomes the third thing “alien to both, [...] whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” (Rancière 2009, 15).

### **Beyond masterplanning: The passages of choreotopography and mythopoetics**

Reflecting on dramaturgic implications of the work at Schauspiel Dortmund, I was struck by resonances with the public art practice of Australian postcolonial poet (*The Road to Botany Bay*, 1987), sound artist and urban designer Paul Carter (b. 1951) in his emphatic attention to “neglected dimensions” (see Carter 2025). His environments for public spaces – such as Yagan Square in Perth (*Passenger*), Federation Square in Melbourne (*Neararnnew*), and Homebush Bay in Sydney (*Relay*) – intervene in urban ‘master planning’ with context-sensitive ‘poetic constructions’. Public space emerges for Carter, above all, as “product of symbolic interactions” (Carter 2020, 14), not from assertive representation of identity – and neither from a fetishised ‘neutrality’, which he decries as functionalist “vacuum culture” (Carter 2015, 57): “Places are atmospheres. They come into being when they acquire the property of drawing things together” (ibid., 96). His work seeks to use the power of representation to ‘stand in’ to embrace the plurality of human sociability and facilitate a ‘coming together’ of many, as Carter envisages citing philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (Carter 2010,



19). It is firmly rooted in Australian postcolonial negotiations between aboriginal-indigenous, white settler, and new migrant communities. Carter bases his spatial artworks on what he terms ‘creative templates’ that form “a set of indications, a multisensory inventory of associations that characterize the place” (Carter 2018, 218) and which await to be “mobilized, reconnected to one another, and reinvested with the creative power that, after all, explains their cultural significance” (ibid., 227).

This approach reveals a vital point of departure for resource-sensitive forms of representation, emphasising the importance of awareness for already existing semiotic, kinetic and affective charges of a production’s respective environment and situation. Neither urban spaces, nor rehearsal rooms, classrooms or other meeting places, come as empty pages waiting to be designed or otherwise filled with ideas; they always already contain that “string figure of potentialities” (Carter 2015, 322), which invite the artist’s and the audiences’ “strategic capacity to respond to what is already in movement in the neighbourhood, to catch on to it and to redirect its energy” (ibid., 320). This mobilisation of resources – people involved, places, sites, environments and all their stories, histories, associations and affinities – as ground, frame and resonance-field for artistic creation helps to avoid a predesigned representational closure that even with best intentions for acting inclusively cements a homogenic, hegemonic order of (non-) accessibility and exclusion: “The object of the new dramaturgy”, Carter asserts, “is to shift attention from fixed (often oppositional) cultural identities to shared identifications” (Carter 2018, 218).

His approach to spatial design and public art works echoes the current move from a dramaturgy of interpretation towards a dramaturgy of facilitation in this core attempt at “encouraging projections or identifications, rather than fixing positions and defining paths” (ibid., 229). Carter’s attention to what he terms ‘choreotopography’ of a site, in particular, can inform dramaturgic sensitivity: how place, as a site of encounter and potential belonging and identification, is shaped not by a singular identity but by the dense ‘atmospheres’ of memory, recollections and likewise inventive imaginations that are semiotic as much as lived, embodied, performed narratives – places are “made after their stories”, as his 2015 book title proposes, and it is bodies that inhabit and move through these places and stories. The dramaturgic engagement with choreotopographic resources may reveal ‘neglected dimensions’ (Carter 2025) through its assemblage of local knowledge and canonical stories, of idiosyncratic narratives and big histories, private associations and collective memories, the fragmental and the big picture. Not the ‘pre-formation’ of an artistic idea or project, but the performative assemblage of multiple stories, movements and affective resonances converging in a space will turn the space of hegemonic, assertive representation (such as a city theatre institution) into a prospective meeting place for encounter and identification. Carter links his poetics aptly with the “archipelagic thinking” of Édouard Glissant’s “poetics of relations” (Glissant 1999, see also Wiedorn 2021; Carter 2010 and 2019). As decolonial practice it stands, first and foremost, for “a mode of acting in the world that is situated, timed and spaced” (Carter 2010, 20). As in the geological formation, the decisive dimension is the fluid relation and ecological affinity *between* individual islands – not the fixed territory itself, but the constant movement and flow of communication (as inter-action and as communal connectivity), enabled

through drift lanes and passages, even over great distance. The figure of the archipelago offers itself as a model for the complexities of our present “society of singularities”, as it demands for constant negotiation, translation, exchange and resolution, hence on a communal engagement that binds all actants together.

It is a central insight of Carter’s approach for dramaturgic practice that the signifiers that will resonate with the plural, near global entanglements of present-day life will not emerge from representational depiction, nor from a narrative evocation of (neither hegemonic nor minoritarian) identities and perspectives, nor from known canonical stories we bring on our theatre stages alone, but from a choreotopographic sensitivity and curiosity for ‘local interferences’ that I had previously suggested as source of dramaturgic ‘counter-texts’ (Boenisch 2022b). As Ndikung notes, the contemporary local must be conceived “in its complexity that goes beyond national or racial categories, and that takes into consideration historical and geographical entanglements, as much as geopolitical and social intricacies” (Ndikung 2020, 186). Research into empirical data, historical events, statistical information, along with the capturing and collecting of local stories, voices, movements and sensory impressions as inspirations for ‘creative templates’ become means to unlock an inherently elastic, interconnected archipelagic plurality of perspectives that draws together and invites identification. The point is not to give up and delete the canon and the ‘old stories’, but to make them move through dramaturgic drift-lanes. As Carter puts it for his situated urban art: While being fully inspired by these stories, it seeks to evade “reducing stories, symbols, and practices to fixed cultural landmarks (inevitably presented defensively or defiantly)” (Carter 2018, 227).

Carter calls the micro- and macronarratives that energise a site and situation and stimulate the audiences’ responsive engagement “mythopoetic”: They invite new, original creativity on the basis of iconographic, kinetic or affective recognition of resonant mythological patterns that are not predicated on psychological individualised and singularised identity. Mythopoetic memes instead of *psychological* identification with another/an Other catalyse a spontaneous *aesthetic* identification, inviting a performative “staying with”, in Harraway’s sense, where one’s interpretive agency negotiates and also contributes to the archipelagic drift lanes between the fixed territories of identity and meaning, as one moves through one of Carter’s spaces or attends a performance. The main task from a dramaturgic perspective is hence to create conditions for the artist’s and the audience’s proprioceptive engagement within a present situation: to set in motion physically, intellectually, affectively. The choreotopographic base of mythopoetic dramaturgic templates hence folds artists and audiences into the drama represented on stage, as they experience their own dramatic movement (taking their actions based on their values) through the material, symbolic and/or affective mythopoetic spaces, and a drama emerges not from depiction, but from standing in the midst of turbulent interferences of plural difference, where antagonist perspectives encounter and negotiate their equally meaning-ful presence and passage within the shared present aesthetic space.

The represented plays and characters, whether taken from canonical plays such as *Antigone* or in new creations, act as dramaturgic catalysts for these archipelagic drift lanes, never prescribing exactly what is to be discovered, experienced and responded. At Schauspiel Dortmund,

the development of such a production practice began with Wissert's ambition, on taking up her office in 2020, to programme the theatre as "a space that is being curated by the city" (Wissert 2021), further reflected in her introduction of the position of a 'city dramaturg'. Her opening production from 2020, with the title *2170 – What will the city have been like, in which we are going to live?* showed what can be described as choreotopographic, mythopoetic and archipelagic approach, even if this was to a large degree pragmatically motivated by the Corona-restrictions of the time. The piece led small audience groups on a walking parcours through Dortmund's inner city, encountering places of an often invisible past and present, such as the site of the Jewish synagogue demolished in 1938 (now the location of the opera house), a memorial for victims of the NSU-neonazi murders of the 2000s, and notorious postwar architecture. Short texts and scenes commissioned from contemporary playwrights were connected by the conceit of an imagined look back at the present from 150 years' time in the future. Later productions, such as *Under Ground*, devised by Sanja Mitrović in 2023, used a similar mythopoetic structure: The narrative activated local topography, here Dortmund's last coal mine (that had closed in 2018) – yet, not to retell its history, but as catalyst for a scenario in a dystopian future, where as a result of the climate catastrophe the city moves underground into the old mining tunnels. In *Antigone*, local mythopoetic resonances were introduced as the tragedy's chorus was performed by the theatre's *Sprechchor*, its ensemble of Dortmund citizen, clad here in miners' work uniforms, their faces painted white, their bodies full of blood and injuries: a chorus of the undead, associating both the play's Theban soldiers fallen in the wars and a local Dortmund past. On another level, the discussed portrayal of Tiresias (and its contrast with Creon) drew further on the contemporary 'mythosphere' and its recognisable signifier-memes that now circulate globally through social media channels and streaming platforms.

'Shared identification' is hence created as the semiotic and not least affective resonances of the dramatic situation with sociocultural constellations (and their dramatic problems) of the present are brought into play in the production. Such a dramaturgic strategy goes beyond conventional approaches that see a canonical drama through the lens of the present or the personalities of the performers, or that just make blatant claims for the canon's universal validity. The dialectics of situated choreotopographic grounding and its *Aufhebung* in a mythopoetic universe overwrites realist representations and conventional assertions of 'authenticity' that rely on specific, marked identities, the actual city space, a real historical event, etc. – strategies still central for the autofictional forms of much postmigrant theatre. The characters here no longer are built through sets of individual psychology; as mythopoetic characters, identified by their choreotopographic resonances, they are easily recognisable because they remain (from a conventional psychological expectation of 'rounded characters') underdetermined. They invite a primarily visual and affective-emotional identification that remains open for multiplicity and plurality, echoing here the broad, open modes of characterisation prevalent in social media reels, reality TV and streaming-series: they, too, insert into dramatic narratives the potential for multiple identification, recognition and extended representational 'standing in' of un-marked positions. At Dortmund, the work of writer-director (and former actor in the theatre's ensemble) Lola Fuchs (b. 1994) is particularly ripe with such

mythopoetic affective and/or iconographic character-typing. She tends to stage somewhat ‘flat’, uni-dimensional in-your-face character-masks that precisely transgress singular individuality as they become projection shells for multiple affective and symbolic attachments, like mirrors open for many imaginable projections instead of asking for identification with one specified and focalised ‘character image’.

## Conclusion: We (have to) decide

In sum, the basis for an archipelagic poetics of theatre production practice emerges from intertwining choreotopographic resonances of specific locality with de-individualised, un- or re-marked mythopoetic openings. The unfixed drifting in-between situatedness and unspecificity invites recognition and aesthetic identification with matters, materials and agencies not determined by identitarian fixture. It puts into play various worlds simultaneously, allowing for associative relating and archipelagic affiliation: the coming together in difference that Carter’s city spaces aim for, and which in our case of contemporary theatre, precisely this nowadays minoritarian cultural space might offer: as (post-)representational place where there is space and time afforded for multiple identifications, ambiguous experiences of difference and in-decision, and a resonant responsiveness in copresence. Departing from observations about the work at Schauspiel Dortmund under Julia Wissert’s artistic leadership, this article argued that the place for diversity, access and inclusion in theatre production hence begins long before considerations of mediation efforts *after* the theatre work has been created – but where each production starts from making a space and structuring time. The dramaturgic attention to and curiosity for choreotopographic contexts and the mythopoetics implicit in the production’s material and symbolic site help to shape its potential for an ‘archipelagic thinking’ that clears semantic as well as kinaesthetic and affective drift-lanes for creative imagination and aesthetic forms so they inspire relations, negotiations and passages instead of collapsing artistic and aesthetic potentialities into a singular determined hegemonic narrative through the depiction of pre-figured identities and interpretations.

Instead of a ‘special need’ of minoritarian groups, diversity and inclusion are tools to shape (in rehearsal and performance) similarly emergent ecologies of matters, materials and agencies that enable an environmental relationality: the becoming, being, feeling and moving as part of a choreotopographic discourse in-the-making, which Carter repeatedly links back to the French etymology of a movement hither-and-thither that instantiates a dialogic relation. Instead of scripting identities, narratives, territories and meanings, an archipelagic approach to theatre production will accordingly enable “plural self-relating” (Carter 2019, 2), as representational dynamics of ‘standing in’ are employed to generate non-hierarchised performative spaces of un-marked communication, exchange and possible passage between multiple, hugely variant and even contradictory expectations, responses, associations and histories of all participants – making possible through the common act of sense-making the shared relation and identification Carter named as central ambition of today’s ‘new dramaturgy’. Where the poetics of a production process reveals its attitude towards ‘society as it is’ – and the present world is certainly one of multifaceted

simultaneity and polyvalent parity of differences not relating in harmony but ripe with dramatic, at times violent conflict – the decision of whether aesthetic, artistic and dramaturgic choices reproduce (often unwittingly) exclusion, denigration, hierarchies and superiority, or instead use the unstable, fluid space of theatral presence, encounter and sense-making to actively produce – not just represent – an archipelagic commonality through poetic imagination and communication, inviting a coming together, watching together and being together in and with all differences, is ours to make – each time anew, with every single production project.

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