

To the winners of the international playwrights competition 2010

**„Refugees/Exile/Identity/Migration“**

International Playwrights' Forum of the International Theatre Institute (ITI)

Esteemed laureates

Dear Organizers of the festival Heimat: Odyssee

Dear Contributor Mohamed Saif Alafkham

Dear Colleagues of the IPF and the ITI Germany

Dear Actors and Actresses of the Stadttheater Bremerhaven

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the International Playwrights' Forum I would like to thank the organizers for a wonderful collaboration.

As a Jury member I have been asked to honour the three winning plays from the point of view of the jury and to inform you about the 2010 competition.

The International Playwrights' Forum is a working group of the ITI (International Theatre Institute). Playwrights, dramaturges, directors, and translators are the members, currently from 27 nations. Many members are from Europe, but you will also find members from Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Kongo, and Kamerun.

The International Playwrights' Forum was founded during the ITI World Congress in Seoul in September 1997. Its structure is democratic and the goal is simple: to get plays on stage, to get plays translated, to network and to disseminate information for playwrights all over the world.

Since 2002 IPF has launched a biannual international competition for playwrights in one of the UNESCO languages English or French. In addition we organize Roundtables, presentations of playwrights as well as workshops for young playwrights. Target sites of the workshops are Jamaica, Pakistan, and Philippines. The topic „Refugees/Exile/Identity/Migration“ of this years competition effects the fate of millions of people worldwide. 163 plays from 43 countries were submitted. No previously published or produced plays were accepted. Monologues were not accepted either.

The variety and diversity of the texts sent in greatly impressed the jury. It was incredible to see how the topic triggered the imagination, and which stories were created. The texts that moved the jury most reflected in a personal way on our modern globalised world and contained some painful contemporary issues.

We found a harsh, bleak reality full of violence, a world in which human beings have to fight for survival. The texts reflect the cruelty and the absurdity of a world ruled by money. Few plays showed a sense of hope for a better world or even a longing for understanding, love, and security. Some also spoke of the necessity of re-defining one's identity and settling in a foreign place.

We read personal biographical stories about family ties that had been torn, discovered dark descriptions of real or imagined situations in refugee camps or

prisons – in short, the consequences of political decisions. The reality of war revealed existential loneliness and the agony of oppressed human beings. We also read about the quiet, internal, every-day rampage that goes on unnoticed by the world outside.

Unfortunately, many of the plays lacked the artistic or formal quality that would turn an individual's imagination into a stage play, while others took a backseat place due to translation difficulties (from the original language into English or French).

It did not take the jury long to choose the three prize-winning texts, all three of them from Europe this time. (The jury reads anonymous texts, not knowing who the author is or where she/he comes from).

Today, I am very happy to meet the authors behind the prize-winning texts. Congratulations to all three prize-winners!

### **3rd Prize „Unravelling Myths“ by Kathleen Desmond (Ireland)**

A young man who was brought up in the United States goes back to his roots in Ireland. He meets his family in Belfast, among whom is his charismatic sister who is an activist member of the IRA. In seek of his origins and identity his life will take a whole new turn.

Kathleen Desmond took the political situation in Northern Ireland in 1992 as the starting point for a modern version of the Greek tragedy “Elektra”. Alternating between the characters' perspectives and different time levels, she unravels the myths hidden behind this family's history. With its engaging political story and immediate dialogue she successfully examines the cycle of violence in public and in private. The structure of the play reveals a practical, highly competent grasp of theatre.

#### **Kathleen Desmond**

is an Irish teacher, drama in education lecturer/teacher, arts facilitator, director, producer and writer based in Dublin. She attended the New College of Speech and Drama North London and holds a Diploma in Dramatic Art from the London University. Later she attended the University of Dublin, Trinity College and was awarded (Honours BA Degree in English). She works as a teacher and lecturer and in the art field as a writer and director for schools, colleges, fringe theatre companies and amateur drama groups.

### **2nd Prize „Maxine“ by Philip St. John, Ireland**

An English art curator discovers an Irish painter who had disappeared for 30 years and travels to the Caribbean to meet him. She meets his family and soon senses that there are many mysteries and secrets surrounding this man and his muse.

Philip St John has managed to create a dense, eerie atmosphere between his characters. Danger is in the air as Clair is looking for truth, and the audience is drawn into this quest to reveal Maxine's secret.

St John's first play has a certain quality of language and keeps up the suspense to the final scene. The reflections on art add another interesting aspect of the text.

### **Philipp St John**

was born in Dublin and now lives nearby in Bray. In the 1980s he taught for two years in Jamaica. In 2010 he resigned from teaching to write full time and received a literary bursary from The Arts Council Of Ireland. His first novel *Crazy Baldheads*, which is set in the Caribbean, has been taken on by the Jonathan Williams Literary Agency. St John's short stories have been published in New Irish Writing and broadcast on RTE Radio. *Maxine* is his first play.

### **1st Prize "The Diamond Stars" by Maya van den Heuvel-Arad (Netherlands)**

Seifu and Amadu, two young refugees from Sierra Leone, end up as immigrants in Amsterdam. By coincidence they meet again. Their personal fate in Africa has melded them together. The two men are suddenly fighting each other while hanging from a skyscraper cleaning windows...

Right from the play's dramatic opening scene, Maya van den Heuvel-Arad develops a sensitive, powerful and exciting story with an impressive sense of precision and dramaturgy. She lets the audience witness this "re-encounter" of two people who share a difficult history that is slowly revealed.

The story of Seifu and Amadu is very touching. Two people, who used to be close friends, finish up as immigrants in Holland. The civil war in Sierra Leone has turned them into enemies – into perpetrator and victim. Both believe they can start a new life in a foreign country, but the past has traveled with them and they are forced to face the truth.

Strong, dense dialogues and finely-defined, complex protagonists characterise the twelve scenes. The story is believable and extremely well researched. A play that is set in the harsh reality of every-day life still leaves space for poetic moments.

This play, whose quality of language is superb, will certainly be met with enthusiasm by any director or actor.

### **Maya van den Heuvel-Arad**

is an Israeli dramaturge and writer based in Amsterdam. She has written texts for theatre and television in English and in Hebrew. She holds an M. A. in dramaturgy from the University of Amsterdam where she graduated with distinction.

Her Master thesis „*Focalizing Bodies: Visual Narratology in the Post-Dramatic Theatre*“ has been nominated for the 2010 Theatre Institute Netherland's award and is about to be published by Tectum Verlag in 2011.

She works, among others, with upcoming theatre director Sanja Mirović.

Since 2009 she has been the dramaturge of Ilay den Boer's award winning series of performances *Het Beloofde Feest* (*The Promised Feast*).

I hope the three plays will soon be performed in German- or English-speaking countries.

Ursula Werdenberg, Jury Member  
Bremerhaven 11 June 2011

Jury of the 2010 Playwriting Competition "Refugees/Exile/Identity/Migration":

Alice Hubball (Actress, Belgium)

Fray Paolo Casuaro (Playwright, Philippines)

Ursula Werdenberg (Dramaturge, Secretary General ITI Switzerland)