

## 01: Is theatre accessible?

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Access to theatre and performances, or also the question: why theatre songs are somehow also involved. When I think about access to theatre, I somehow think about the audience and who has access? Maybe also, who wants access and who gives access? If you can ask the questions. The first thing that of course strongly regulates access for the audience are the ticket prices, which are becoming more and more expensive. They are also fundamentally very expensive. Of course, there are reductions and in the meantime there are also projects that are intended to make access possible for people with less financial means who are not students, trainees or pensioners. Nevertheless, the prices are very high. And those who can afford it are mostly rather well-off clientele who, according to the cliché, come from an academic background. Which is also my impression of the audience experiences I've had in Berlin. So it's more of an academic, educated class, I'll call it that now. An audience that also has the claim to understand what it's all about, and that's a very central point for me. I think many people honestly think that theatre has such an elitist reputation. That you have to understand what is happening, because there is reading in the plays, in the performances, that it always has to be interpretable in some way and that if I can't read anything in it, don't understand anything about it, then I'm too stupid. Of course, I don't feel like dealing with it further if I have the feeling that I'm too stupid or too dumb for the culture. And it shouldn't be the claim at all. Of course there are ways to convey this, for example the programme booklet. But I first have to be in the theatre, have decided to go to this play, in order to even read the programme or come into contact with it. Of course, there is also the website. Part of the dramaturgy work should be: We also communicate what the play is about outside of the performances and try to create access to the content. I would often simply like the theatre makers to say that nothing needs to be understood at first. Even if they have a very clear message, it usually doesn't have to be decoded, it's very clear to me. And if you encode something, then there are several ways to interpret it. And none of them should be somehow wrong or right or the clever or not so clever variant. That's why I think it's actually less about an academic understanding in solving puzzles, but more about an experience and also a subjective perception. And I think the more we can proclaim that it's more about "what do I see in it", "how does it affect me?" rather than "there is one ultimate reading", whether that's drama-based or more abstract or physical performance taking place in dance. Of course, when I hear text and I understand the text, I think it needs to be unravelled or I need to follow along or I need to be able to summarize the plot at the end or something. But I think that whether there is that text or not. I think it's about being aware, even in this structure. I think that if we could proclaim that and also offer experiences that confirm that, both from the kind of staging and from the ideology in the audience, if you can perhaps exaggerate it like that. So if we could simply also make people feel uncomfortable to express their thoughts about it afterwards. Then I think we could create a lot of access. I think that standing there and not knowing how to orient oneself because one feels that one's own perception is wrong or not clever enough leads to a whole big barrier, and I would like to see that abolished. And here I would like to quote Thomas Schmidt, who did a big study on theatre, power and money. He found out a very shocking, low percentage in the single digits of who still goes to the theatre at all. Who said we should all just become mentors, take a person who doesn't go to the theatre regularly and take them with us and give them that. And I would want to pass on to them that we try to show the person that it's not about being clever or not about understanding a lot, but about experiencing and perceiving the whole thing and how it's about it.