

PRACTICE OF CARE

m2act / Schauspielhaus Zürich 21.22



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1. SHORT TAKE

With the artistic direction of Nicolas Stemann and Benjamin von Blomberg at Schauspielhaus Zürich, the project of a theater that aims to counter discrimination of all kinds and create protected spaces for artistic development beyond traditional power relations has begun in 2019. Such a project, which underpins the operating culture and structure from the ground up with new premises and permeates it ideally, is long-term in nature and must take place on many levels. This is where our work comes in.

With a diverse team of ensemble members, dramaturges, and assistants, we want to collaboratively design the guidelines of a *Practice of Care* for the employees of the Schauspielhaus and sustainably anchor a conscious and careful treatment of different bodies, anti-discriminatory speech, and power-sensitive action in the DNA of the house.

How can we think about all bodies in our daily work and do justice to their vulnerability and endangerment through discrimination, exhaustion and illness? How can careful speaking in work situations - for example in rehearsals, meetings, in exchange with the audience - be established at a house? How can we actively develop awareness for our own actions and those of others? How do we establish consent and how do we reject it, how do we create intimate situations and mark our boundaries? How do we, as employees, exercise our mutual duty of care for each other?

For all these questions, we offer spaces for learning together, create formats for conversations and encounters, and develop a mentoring program as well as a regular offering of workshops, trainings, and tools for everyday rehearsal and professional life. In the end, we want to create a *Manual of Care* that bundles our experiences and provides suggestions for an individually adopted Practice of Care for all kind of cultural organizations.

2. WHO WE ARE

We are a team of ensemble members, dramaturges and assistants from Schauspielhaus Zürich. **The Core Care Group** of the project initiators consists of Frances Chiaverini, Ondrej Vidlar and Fadrina Arpagaus. The associated **Take Care Group** consists of 10 people from various departments who support the project as ambassadors and provide ideas and regular feedback.

3. THE WAY WE'D LOVE TO GO

We start carefully, with questions. The first, basic one: How can the practice of meeting each other, of talking, of negotiating (conflicts) among employees in a cultural institution be changed in a sustainable way, if we focus on mindfulness, care and responsibility for each other?

We can think of different ways. On the one hand, there is the way from top to bottom, *top down*: It requires a management that implements measures and thus ensures fair wages, keeps an eye on overtime and, if necessary, pays it out or compensates it, implements a

sustainable family policy in the company and protects bodies, psyches and materials with resource-conserving production. Or there is the path that starts with a statement: A theater management, perhaps with its employees, enters into a discussion about the values it wants to live by and makes them the measure of its actions, for example by publishing a *Code of Conduct*. Both ways certainly have advantages: In theory, nothing stands in the way of implementation of the first, because it is in the hands of the decision-makers and does not have to be fought for. The second creates at least conceptual clarity: This is who we are, this is what we want, this is what we stand for.

We have a third possible path in mind: one that assigns employees the position of actors from the very beginning, one that lets them act on their own authority beyond hierarchical asymmetries. One that does not remain bound to confessions and statements, but connects theory and practice, and perhaps even gives priority to practice. We don't really trust the performativity of manifestos yet, but we are strongly convinced that change only becomes manifest in doing itself. This making is an experimenting, an inventing, a try and error that is meant to slowly, gently, and sustainably change our everyday actions and speech on the job. It is, in all its error-proneness, definitely an emancipatory practice.

The *Practice of Care* is an offering by employees for employees. We are not decision-makers at the operational interfaces of the company, not points of light in the organizational chart. Our interest is to build sustainable structures of care and responsibility as colleagues with and for colleagues by doing things together in different ways: We share work and life experiences in spaces that we try to make as non-violent and non-discriminatory as possible. We connect in listening to each other, we support each other in personal and professional conflicts. We learn from ourselves and from experts who are specialists in caring, emancipatory speech and action practices. We practice what we have learned in our daily interactions; we practice speaking appreciatively, clearly and transparently. We experiment with it all and celebrate. We take responsibility for each other - but only if we want to do so voluntarily.

Our models are approaches of Community Accountability from the USA, which are also discussed in the European area under the term "Transformative Justice". These approaches have emerged in dealing with sexualized violence, intimate partner violence and police violence. The primary goal is that conflict resolution is not outsourced to external institutions and facilities, but that all members of a community are empowered to take responsibility for themselves and for others, to tackle problems together as victims, witnesses and participants, to care for each other and to create an awareness for a careful coexistence free of violence and discrimination.

We believe in the unifying power of colleagues that emerges under the radar of management meetings and operational decisions of a directorate, jointly shaping atmospheres, languages and spaces of collaboration. We believe in the tenacious, everyday and unagitated practice of gentle, caring and appreciative speech and action that re-grounds our everyday work atmospheres.

On the one hand, our *Practice of Care* aims at the **general everyday work**, our **daily life together** in the theater: here it is about creating awareness for questions of caring, providing a support network of colleagues for colleagues and learning opportunities, as well as inviting artistic experiments and being and celebrating together. On the other hand, we want to

develop a *protocol of care* for **rehearsal processes** that the respective production teams can specify and apply concretely to their rehearsals.

4. GOALS & WISHES

What do we want the Schauspielhaus to look like in a year? What do we want for ourselves and what for the others? What structures do we want to create?

1. We create a **care-network (#1)** for us and our colleagues, which facilitates a reliable, trustful and responsible contact with each other. We accompany each other, we and our colleagues know who we can turn to when we want to talk about work experiences or are in a conflict and thus experience support from colleague to colleague. The basis of every conversation is listening and the attempt to find a solution together at eye level. This exchange is intended as a confidential contact point and does not replace professional therapeutic counseling or psychological coaching. The advantage of such an offer is its easy accessibility, the shared experience of all participants in the theater or in the same institution, the encounter among equals and the lack of formal hurdles.
2. By offering **workshops (#2)**, we create opportunities for ourselves and our colleagues to learn new tools of communication and action and to develop personal potential. We learn to articulate ourselves, to recognize discrimination of all kinds, to create intimacy in collective processes together and at the same time to draw boundaries; to apply appreciative communication and to solve conflicts together.
3. The **Core Care Group** invites you to **artistic experiments (#3)** that explore the themes of care, intimacy and tenderness. And to dinners, hang-outs and parties!

Our concept is based on these three pillars which we label with **#1 sharing, #2 learning, 3# experimenting**. The principle of all offers is: They are communicated transparently in the house and are accessible to all without registration. In addition, the Core Care Group invites colleagues individually and personally to meetings, evenings and workshops. All offers and any exchange are based on absolute voluntariness.

#1 Sharing

1. PRESENCE OF CARE

As the Core Care Group we are recognizable, visible and approachable for our colleagues. We have a weekly *jour fixe*, where we drink coffee together and anyone who wants to can come and have breakfast and chat with us. In addition, there is the possibility to arrange consultation hours with us (individually, in a team with us/or with the ensemble spokespersons) to discuss specific concerns.

1x a week: Slow Breakfast, for example on Thursdays 9-10 am in the garden/ensemble rooms

By appointment: Consultation hours, 1+1, 1+2 etc., possibly with ensemble spokespersons?
Principle: Colleagues support colleagues.

Building on this, possibly: **ARCHIVE OF CONFLICTS**

Ongoing: We anonymously collect the stories of situations and conflicts from work contexts that are told to us and generate model situations with collaborative solution approaches. > for *Manual of Care*, see page 10.

2. MENTAL MENTORING | ALLIES ALLIANCE | CROSS THE BORDER TANDEM

We initiate three different **mentoring/allies and tandem programs** in-house: *Mental Mentoring*, *Allies Alliance* and *Cross the border Tandem*.

The aim of all three programs is to enable employees to have trusting, regular 1+1 contact with a counterpart, both personally and professionally, to provide a framework for this and - if necessary - to support them in their discussions.

MENTAL MENTORING

The mentoring program is primarily intended for newcomers to the profession, newcomers to the institution and assistants: in contact with an older, experienced colleague, they gain insights into the theater business and can exchange experiences with her. However, such mentoring is also possible between colleagues from the same department on an equal footing. Mentoring involves exchanging experiences, building trust, mutual support, joint conflict analysis, working out conflict solutions and options for action, mutual feedback and, if necessary, professional exchange.

Each person in the house can choose and approach a mentor, receives support from us in the implementation of the mentoring if necessary and the possibility to access our resources in the ensemble rooms (space, rest, drinks, food).

We also develop a **guide** in our *Manual of Care* on how such a mentoring could look like.

ALLIES ALLIANCE

For all those who experience discrimination at work in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, chronic illness, abled/disabled bodies and would like to engage in an

exchange about it, we want to establish an **allies pool** where employees announce their intention to be available for one-on-one conversations on these topics.

CROSS THE BORDER TANDEM

In addition, we would like to promote exchange between the three large departments of art, technology and administration in the theater. Each employee receives a credit in the canteens per year to invite one or more person:s of choice from the other departments for a drink and an exchange. The amount can be used for several one-time meetings with different people or a regular, trustful contact with a single person, so it can be used for many quick coffees or an extended lunch.

The principle is: the invitation.

3. PROTOCOL FOR SAFE REHEARSALS

In the course of the 21.22 season, we are developing a protocol based on two productions (by Suna Gürler, Milo Rau) that communicates the values of the collaboration to all participants in advance and clarifies expectations based on a checklist, names 2-3 care persons for the production, creates vessels and formats for regular rehearsal-accompanying check-ins and check-outs, and thus offers spaces for feedback and individual care.

4. SOFT SPACES | SHARINGS

Regularly: *My Body Practice:* I share my body practice with you: Yoga, Meditation, Dancing etc.

Principle: Offer communicated in the house + personal invitation

Regularly: *My Piece of Culture:* I share a book, text, film, discourse, etc. with you.

Principle: Offer communicated in the house + personal invitation

Possible formats that could emerge from this: 1x annual Living Library Festival / Regular Reading Groups

#2: Learning #educateourselves

1. OUR YEAR OF CARE | TENDER TOOLS WORKSHOPS

1x per month = 10 workshops per year

Within one year we set 10 topics that we find important and in which we want to acquire knowledge - with the help of experts. In a second step we learn to give workshops for colleagues on these topics.

Principle: We ask ourselves: What do we want to learn? From whom do we want to learn? And we ask the house: What do you want to be able to do?

Possible topics:

1: Discrimination-sensitive and racism-critical language: Mandy Abou Shoak, anti-racism coach

2: Antisexist awareness and language: Anna Rosenwasser, LGBTQI+ activist

3: Collaboratively creating intimate spaces: Debbie Macaulay/Mira Roj
<https://www.farben-blind.ch/events/in-liberation/>

4: Consent/Boundaries, Speak up, speak out: Kasia Szustow, Intimacy Coordinator

5: Voice Training: How can we make our voice heard?: Veronica Rueckert
<https://uwm.edu/sce/instructors/veronica-rueckert/>

6: Decolonial non-violent Communication/Workbook:
<https://co-conspirator.press/Decolonizing-Non-Violent-Communication>

7: Multilingual collaboration: N.N.

8: Performing Gender: Teresa Vittucci, Performer

9: Discussing Values/Values Game: Frances, Ondrej, Fadrina

10: Designing Sessions/Feedback Methods: Nadja Schnetzler, www.word-and-deed.org

2. A-CARE-DEMY

1x per year

The **A-Care-Demy** offers 1x a year for 1 week workshops, courses and lectures from employees for employees.

All who work at the house can participate, as teachers and learners. Everyone can teach what he or she wants and is good at: Lighting design, sound engineering, sewing costumes, fermenting, mixing drinks, shamanic incense rituals, drawing CAD plans, breakdancing, meditation, making frames, translating, accounting, programming, hacking, designing instastories, screen printing, photography, etc. In this way, all those who want to, give the others insights into their professional and/or personal expertise.

At the same time, the **A-Care-Demy** is also a **discrimination-critical, feminist and decolonial knowledge factory**: along the classic elementary school subjects *German, English, math, history, sports*, etc., there are opportunities for all colleagues to get to know decolonial, feminist and inclusive practices and subject areas. New knowledge practices are hidden behind the standard subject names: *Mathematics* uses statistics and numbers to show us how patriarchal and racist the world is set up, who sits in positions of power and who earns how much, who has how much speaking time, etc. In addition there are lessons about social economic models, labor struggles, wage justice and redistribution. *German, English, French* means Breaking the Canon, canonical material in all languages is discussed and deconstructed. *Vocabulary* is a lesson in decolonial, feminist, discrimination-sensitive vocabulary. *History* offers historical lessons on colonialism in Switzerland, etc., *Philosophy* is Enlightenment critique and feminist discourse, *Biology* is lessons in gender diversity, etc.

Learning and workshop sessions generally take place during working hours. Participation as student and/or teacher is possible and voluntary for all staff members of the house.

#3: Experimenting

1. PERFORMATIVE POWER MAPPING

TBD/The goal is to use the following questions to make power structures in the company visible and to develop a physical, informal organization chart:

1. Which people and departments form your direct environment in the company and what is your relationship to them? Distinguish between formal (professional, collegial) and informal (trusting, friendly) relationships. Make a sketch.
2. How close are you to the leadership/formally designated decision makers?
3. What decisions can/do you make yourself?
4. Who or what are you responsible for in your work?
5. Do you have a budget, and if so, for what?
6. From whom do you get information: formally and informally?
7. To whom do you pass on information and through which channels?
8. Where do you have room for maneuver beyond the tasks directly related to your job?
9. On a scale of 1-10, how empowered do you feel in the workplace, measured by the things you want to do and can actually do?
10. Where do you feel hindered in your creative freedom?

2. POWER DREAMING

Another idea could be a collective **Power Dreaming** to develop in an imaginative game an institutional landscape of beauty and power together, following the practice of Deborah Birch: <https://deborahbirch.net/projects/the-orange-gamepractice>

3. PHOTO BOOK + INVITATIONS FOR DINNER

Not only in the independent scene, but also at the Schauspielhaus, we are dealing with the question of whether and how we should and can collaboratively develop a code of conduct for the house. What if we jump into the work by choosing a playful way and design a "Photo Book" that people can fill in and pass on to the next colleague, following the European tradition of a "friendship book"? It's a book with pre-printed personal questions you give to your teenage friends, for example: What's your favorite color, what's your favorite pop star, what are your hobbies, what do you want to be when you're grown up etc.? Normally, the people you give the book to feel very honored and answer the questions very carefully, they mostly also add an individual note with or a drawing, poetry, personal wishes etc. We could take this principle and ask them instead of personal questions regarding care: What values are important for them, how do they want to be treated, what do they like and don't like at work, what do they dream of etc.? People would have a couple of days to fill in the questions and then pass the book on to a person of their choice, so in the end we have a couple of personally created statements and indeed a kind of survey about how they imagine their workplace to be. After everyone would have completed the form, we can invite the people in

1 of the books (for sure we need more than 1 for the whole theater) for dinner to say thank you and discuss further questions of work and care.

4. PARTIES AND HANG-OUTS

... and what do we have in the end?

Goal: *A Manual of Care or Practice of Care Starter Pack*. We develop a manual/workbook full of tools, thoughts and visions to help embed practices of care in a cultural institution.

Parts:

- + PRACTICE OF CARE WORKBOOK/PLAYBOOK with questions, visions, ideas.
- + MANUAL FOR MENTORING
- + PROTOCOL FOR SAFE REHEARSALS
- + TENDER TOOLS Communications tools for daily life
- + GAMES TO PLAY
- + RECEPIES TO COOK TOGETHER
- + PARTY INGREDIENTS
- + VOCABULARY/GLOSSARY

...

Timeline / What's next

September 2021

Slow Breakfast 1x a month

October 2021

Consultation hours

From November 2021

Start MENTAL MENTORING | ALLIES ALLIANCE | CROSS THE BORDER TANDEM

PROTOCOL FOR SAFE REHEARSALS

First Take: Production Suna Gürler, November 2021-January 2022

From December 2022

Start OUR YEAR OF CARE | TENDER TOOLS WORKSHOPS

1x a month

From January 2022

PHOTO BOOK + INVITATIONS FOR DINNER

March 2022

PROTOCOL FOR SAFE REHEARSALS

Second Take: Milo Rau, «Wilhelm Tell», March-April 2022

PERFORMATIVE POWER MAPPING

May 2022

POWER DREAMING

Spring 2022

SOFT SPACES | SHARINGS

Fall 2022

A-CARE-DEMY

HEALING PARTIES

Spring 2023

Edited and printed MANUAL OF CARE – A WORK+PLAY_BOOK

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