



FESTIVAL INFO No. 5 (21.9.2014)

International Workshop: "Culture Without Borders"

On Saturday (20 September from 11:00 to 14:15), three dozen interested participants from various countries discussed opportunities and issues of cultural cooperation across national and continental borders, taking the Cologne-Ouagadougou theatre cooperation as an example. The workshop participants included filmmakers from **Madagascar, Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, and Burkina Faso**, festival organisers from **Algeria, Portugal, Hamburg, and Cologne**, and representatives of further local cultural institutions and initiatives.

A documentary film by **Christian Hennecke** served as a point of departure for the workshop. The film looks at how the play **OMBRES D'ESPOIR** came about, including its writing by the Congolese-born writer Wilfried N'Sondé and its staging by the FALINGA theatre troupe of Ouagadougou together with Cologne's Theater im Bauturm, featuring actors from both sides and held at festivals in both countries.

Burkina Faso's **Dani Kouyaté**, who is widely known as a film director both in Africa and abroad, also served as director for the transcontinental piece of theatre and took part in the festival workshop in his role as this year's African Film Festival patron. He and others praised the documentary on theatrical cooperation, because it deals "not just with positive experiences of transnational theatre work", but also problems like language barriers, actors' differing approaches, and different expectations of each audience. After initial comments by the people attending who are involved with the theatre world, the discussion turned to subjects including an example of cultural differences cited by **Dani Kouyaté** that is reflective of work between actors from Europe and Africa. In Burkina Faso, children do not ask "why", but rather learn early to not ask questions and to instead learn from the examples set by adults. Workshop participants confirmed that in other African countries as well, many learning methods, such as music lessons, do not take place in the forms commonly seen here – through studying notes and measures – but rather by young people observing experienced musicians and trying to do as they do.

The workshop participants came out of the event agreeing that in various forms of transnational cultural work – whether in theatre, film, music or dance – differences should be less emphasised. Instead, similarities that bind people together should be the focus, in order to enable the joint production of art at a higher level.

The concrete outcomes of the workshop include many participants' desire to use the documentary as part of their own (educational) work. In addition, the discussion will continue around a new and continuing cooperation of the Theater im Bauturm and West African colleagues, again with **Christian Hennecke** behind the camera.