

**Money Makes the World Go Round**

With a text collage, the Artistic Director of the Elysium Festival Bernried warns of endangerment to democracy

*Bernried.* “Democracy is not the best form of government, but it’s the best form we have”, said Winston Churchill. But in times of financial and government debt crises democracy is endangered, and post-democratic tendencies are on the rise. The Elysium Festival Bernried wants to warn of that danger and sends a signal with the program “When I think of Germany...” In any case, the audience at the monastery went home in deep thought after this literary collage with the motto: “Defending Democracy”.

The texts recited by Director Gregorij von Leitis – from Gandhi to Tucholsky to Kennedy – were deeply moving and showed that danger to democracy is timelessly relevant. The Austrian-Jewish jurist Hans Kelsen recognized already in 1932, that democracy is the one form of government which defends itself least against its adversaries. As Michael Lahr, Program Director and Associate Artistic Director emphasized in his introduction, the murders of the NSU were the reason for creating this multi-day series of events. He proved, by quoting numbers from the new federal states (former East Germany), that the danger from the right was much more serious than the danger from the left.

This past decade was marked by the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Islamophobia connected with that, as well as the world financial crisis and the uncertainty in the financial markets. This, according to Lahr, led to a loss of control in politics. The sad upshot: it is said that there is no governing against financial markets. The politicians hid their powerlessness behind phrases like “no alternatives” or “force of circumstance”. They governed for specific economic elites and against the people. “There’s only one kind of merchandise that remains the cheapest in the land, and that’s the reject goods called people”. The Austrian writer Jury Soyfer wrote that as far back as 1937. Should the people rebel against that, they would be branded as undemocratic by the politicians. The journalist Erich Fried wrote in 1986: “It always was the complainers and the critics who recognized the problems”. Today we have the concept of “Wutbürger” – the enraged citizen.

According to Lahr, the outcome of this development is that the outcry for simple solutions, the longing for a powerful man is getting stronger and stronger. “Therefore the state should not economize with culture. But in Germany and the EU, all that education means is the training of capabilities which can be economically useful. But it is worthwhile to fight for democracy”. Robert F. Kennedy, in his address in Cape Town in 1966, formulated it like this: “Few will have the greatness to bend history, but each of us can work to change a small portion of the events, and then the total -- all of these acts -- will be written in the history of this generation”.

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