

Ladies and gentlemen,
dear Mayor Ottilie Scholz,
dear President of the Bundestag Norbert Lammert,

This foyer has seen a great many visitors in its long and exciting history. However, being able to welcome all of you to this banquet today is a premiere that I am particularly pleased about.

Today, you have not come here to watch a play. You have come here, to this theatre, to talk about the city. We are gathered here today to think about the future of the city together.

Today, we open this international city and art festival, because I am convinced that the theatre is one of the essential places where a city gathers to think about itself. We are a theatre for the city and by this we mean that we are a theatre for the whole city. We are not an elitist place for high culture, but we open our stages for many diverse theatre forms and cultures. This is the way for a theatre to create identity. In the theatre, a city can find itself again and recognize its possibilities. Not only an identity for a city is created this way, but confidence.

A municipal theatre that does not confront these questions not only risks its own credibility, but ultimately its own future - because the future of the theatre is tied to the future of the city. However, the theatre is able to actively influence and shape this future.

It is because we are convinced of this that we initiated a number of city and art projects in the past. This is why we were happy to participate in the projects of the European capital of culture in 2010.

The Detroit Project continues this work: In cooperation with the Urbane Künste Ruhr we want to create new perspectives with a view to sustainability.

This is why we, with our partners, called into life the "Zukunftsakademie" (future academy) and, at the Schauspielhaus, have cooperated with the dance company "Renegade" for three years.

This is why we reached out to the students at the Ruhr University with the theatre flat rate. And this is also why I did not hesitate for a second in the summer of 2012 when it came to organizing a solidarity event for the preservation of the Opel plant. I did not hesitate either in March 2013 when 20.000 people in the city expressed their solidarity with Opel together with us. Not only do people expect this kind of social commitment from their theatre, it is also something the theatre is obliged to do. Because we are a municipal theatre, a city's theatre, and this means we are a theatre for the city.

Bochum faces a lot of challenges and changes. It is about employment, social security and fair opportunities for everyone. But there is a lot more at stake.

We are facing changes that reach deep into the social and cultural fabric of this city and this region. What is at stake is the question of whether Bochum can successfully move into the 21st century and whether it is still going to be an open, social and fair city then. If Bochum is not an industrial city any more, what is it going to be in the future? An impoverished “shrinking city” like Detroit or a city which confidently develops the future and tries new paths? Can we make culture and education an engine of the city and get people to participate in these processes? Is there going to be a fair share of opportunities for work and education for everyone?

In order to do this, we need a concept of culture and education which is as dynamic and open as the social processes we are experiencing.

We in this theatre see ourselves as promoters of this transformative process, which we want to actively influence together with the people and institutions of Bochum.

Because we are going to have to bravely explore new roads together and be open for changes. Only then can we succeed in turning today’s conflicts into tomorrow’s solutions.

But Bochum is not facing these great changes alone: cities all over Europe are changing. Without a European perspective, the questions of the future cannot be solved. This is why we would like to cordially welcome our guests from Poland, England, Spain and even from Detroit.

You, and with you a lot of other international artists make this project what it is.

The Detroit Project is a connection of international art with local partners,

it opens up European debates and perspectives,

it brings art to the city which includes and invites everyone,

confusing and surprising art,

impulses and energies which we need to shape the city’s future.

I would very warmly like to invite you to join us on our way. You are very welcome here.