

Together out of the crisis

Corona The singer and culture manager Oxana Arkaeva wants to establish in Ulm a "Co-Creation" format in that would turn people otherwise have little to do with art into culture creators. *By Helmut Pusch*

She knows almost all sides of culture: as a singer she was part of the opera company of the Ulm Theater, as a cultural manager she worked for the city of Blaustein and organized the cultural program in Friedrichsau for the Indauna association. As a critic, she writes for opera magazine. And as a freelance artist, she knows the problems caused by the corona pandemic: "We are all de facto banned from working," says Oxana Arkaeva.

It is particularly bitter that the promised political aid does not always get where it is needed. Immediate aid of 9,000 euros was promised to independent artists. With one "no": This help is only available for incurring fixed business costs. A band can apply for grants to cover the rent for its rehearsal studio, a concert organizer for the office rent. But which are the actual costs for a singer? Rent, meals, clothes. However, the cost of living does not yet cover emergency aid.

More funds for the Wilhelmsburg

At least in Baden-Württemberg, the officials have now recognized the problem. A so called "fictitious wages" have been established since two weeks, which a solo artist can then pay for himself. The maximum is 1180 euros.

And there is also regional help: The city of Ulm is funding the pop-up space Wilhelmsburg this year with an additional 70,000 euros so that regional artists can be offered a podium. Another example: The city of Heidenheim has booked professional musicians like Siggie Schwarz or Lee Mayall with their bands for five concerts each on the street - for a fair fee.



She brought the cultur back to Friedrichsau: Operasinger and cultural manager Oxana Arkaeva

Photo: Lars Schwerdtfeger

But Oxana Arkaeva also appeals to the artists to think about new things to battle, survive the crisis, for example to look for new partners. Co-Creation is the magic word that she learned at recent KOKON online conferens in Switzerland. Behind this is the integration of people who have not had much contact with culture into cultural projects is concealed. The concept was developed by Brit Matt Fenton, who has successfully pre-practiced the co-creation in Contact in Manchester for years.

Russisches und Postkartengeschichten auf der Burg

The evening "Na Zdarowje - Speak, Eat, Sing Russkij!"

This event on Sunday August 2nd, at 6 p.m. at Wilhelmsburg, is a musical and culinary encounter with Russia and its culture. It is designed by Oxana Arkaeva, the moderator Nathalie Wenzel, the restaurateur Ludmila Wolf and the Bajan virtuoso Peter Gerter. With language exercises and information on Russian food culture, refined with a pinch of joke, the evening is supposed to provide for mental weight gain and problem-free German-Russian communication.

Postcard stories from "Johanna, the Mouse" tell Thomas Dietrich and the pianist Uli Marquart at 2 p.m. Dietrich wrote the stories as postcards to his six-year-old daughter so that she can also get mail during the lockdown.

In 2008, he had put together a festival program with a group of participants with little cultural affinity, that broke all records - and that with a very ambitious program.

An example of co-creation? "How about a musical that is created by professional artists and amateurs together," says the soprano. It would be conceivable that a libretto for a musical would deal with or based upon a regional theme. Musicians from the region would be invited to write songs for this libretto. A jury, half of whom are professionals and a half amateurs, would then choose which song fits in the story the best. This jury would also choose a stage director. Another example: "Carmen reloaded". The Bizet opera is deconstructed, broken down into individual parts, which are then rehearsed by various ensembles, but ultimately performed together in one piece. Oxana Arkaeva hope three things could emerge out of the experiment: The artists can work again, and through the collaboration, the importance and systemic relevance of art can be felt for the amateurs. "And if people like it, then politics must rethink, give culture the status it deserves," says Arkaeva. That would be her way out of the crisis.