The Berlin Times

A special edition of *The German Times* for the city without walls

Wedding Bling-Bling

Over the past century, this northern borough has been a getaway spot, a communist stronghold, the core of West Berlin's French sector, a sanctuary for immigrants, an artists' hub and always its own city within the city. People from over 165 countries live here today – those who have always called it home and those who've just arrived. Gritty, not glitzy, Wedding is never a bore. pages 4–5

ANNETTE HAUSCHILD/OSTKREUZ

Capital look

Coolness is the Berlin fashion scene's biggest asset

BY JULIA HACKOBER

On the eve of Berlin Fashion Week, a group of bloggers, journalists and Berlin celebrities have gathered at Colette, the brasserie run by star chef Tim Raue. They were invited by Vreni Frost, one of Berlin's first and foremost fashion bloggers. There's bœuf bourguignon and nougat mousse, and it just so happens that Sahra Wagenknecht and Oskar Lafontaine – a powerhouse left-wing couple and two of Germany's most famous political personalities – are sitting at the next table. And, as so often is the case when fashion professionals gather among themselves, what would in any other setting be an innocent question – "So, are you all looking forward to Fashion Week?" – ends up triggering an hours-long debate.

Of course, everyone is looking forward to Fashion Week. For the most part, at least. After all, a whole new and refined designer scene has established itself over the past several years in Berlin. It's a scene shaped by young people adept at drawing attention to their work through good ideas and idiosyncratic imagery, which is essential in the age of Instagram. William Fan, for example, has long since been a darling of the fashion press for his casual collections that function as something between workwear and couture. Fan almost always stages his shows as a form of conceptual art, setting up runways in such varied locations as a Chinese restaurant or a Zen garden. Among the other designers who made the leap from young talent to major player on the fashion scene are Marina Hoermanseder, Malaikaraiss (see picture), Rianna+Nina and Dawid Tomaszewski.

German bloggers and fashion editors look upon "their" designers with a heavy dose of good-natured pride. They see themselves as obliged to give the Berlin fashion scene all the journalistic support they can, all the while nervously watching the evolution of Berlin Fashion Week, which was launched in 2007 and has taken place twice a year since. In the beginning, the event was jazzed up and promoted as a veritable alternative to the big shows in London, Milan and New York. But it never achieved the success it was intended to have, especially as its dates in January and July almost always overlap with the couture shows in Paris and other important international fashion fairs. It was pure folly to expect those key guests – buyers for large department stores – to make an extra trip to Berlin to catch a glimpse of a few junior labels and C celebrities.

These days, Fashion Week Berlin comes to us in a more modest form. Basically, the most important trade fairs, such as the Premium, Panorama and Seek, are garnered with additional shows and events lasting only three days. Gone are the days of the pumped-up celebrity hype associated with the tent at the Brandenburg Gate, which was abandoned after the event's main sponsor, Mercedes-Benz, withdrew in 2018. Organizers have experimented with different concepts and key show locations, such as the Eisstadion Wedding (a skating rink) and an unused department store in Mitte, only to discard them for something new. Even the "Berliner Salon," a group exhibition held at the Kronzprinzenpalais Unter den Linden, where young, unknown designers were able to show their collections to the trade press and buyers, has now been dissolved; the founders of that exhibition, German *Vogue* editor in chief Christiane Arp and event manager Marcus Kurz, announced in March 2019 that they had not been able to develop the format in a competitive way.

Fewer shows, less hype. In other words, after its first semi-successful iteration, Berlin Fashion Week is starting over again from scratch. The question now occupying the fashion cosmos is: What, if anything, remains? We know what Berlin fashion is capable of, but how do we get the word out to the rest of the world without any noteworthy, large-scale fashion event to speak of? How can Berlin assert its position as a fashion capital? These questions revolve not only around how many Fashion Week parties and cocktail receptions have to be canceled; the issue is a far more existential one: How to draw the attention of international buyers, those department stores and boutiques in London, Paris and Singapore, to German brands?

Fashion Council Germany – a lobbying body populated by various industry players (editors-in-chief and economic associations) that also supports select labels through elaborate funding programs – hopes to gain assistance from policymakers. The Fashion Council's oft-repeated mantra is that "fashion must finally be acknowledged as a cultural and economic asset in Germany."

Fortunately, the Fashion Council has found in Dorothee Bär, State Minister for Digitalization, a contact within the government willing to commit to the fashion industry. In fact, last year she even invited a delegation from the Berlin fashion scene to visit the federal chancellery, where Angela Merkel just happened to stop by. In January 2019, Bär also held a pep-talk at a roundtable discussion organized by the Fashion Council and *Icon* magazine where she assured listeners that supporting the fashion industry was indeed one of the federal government's priorities – even if the act of associating with fashion lobbyists was still considered a bit suspicious in Germany: "Some of my colleagues prefer to sit down with the nuclear lobby." Bär's tip to fashion industry representatives is to spotlight themselves more effectively and take even better advantage of the opportunities provided by digitalization.

To be sure, Instagram has completely transformed the fashion industry in recent years, with direct-to-consumer communications already becoming an integral part of many labels' business strategy. Especially for small companies, this opens up entirely new opportunities, because they can attract a highly fashion-conscious community without having to invest in expensive exhibition stands or pay rent for a boutique.

The Berlin shoe brand Aeyde, for example, orchestrated its success story on the internet. The company was founded in 2015 by Luisa Krogmann and Constantin Langholz-Baikousis, two industry veterans who learned their craft at the largest German fashion startup, Zalando. Leveraging digitalization to scale their company from the start, they first built a functioning online shop and then worked on Instagram with major fashion influencers like Camille Charrière and Lucy Williams. After that, the doors to those highly competitive sales areas in major European concept stores opened up automatically.

In fact, there are many young Berlin labels that have Instagram to thank for their success: Jeanne de Kroon, founder of Zazi Vintage, has her upscale hippie dresses sewn by women in NGO projects in such places as Uzbekistan, India and Afghanistan; Marke GmbH (German for: brand) – yes, that's the firm's name – made the leap to the prêt-à-porter shows in Paris with its underground aesthetic; the jewelry designer Lilian von Trapp brought her sustainable gold jewelry to actress Emma Watson via the internet; the founders of Wald Berlin rescued pearl jewelry from its old-fashioned reputation; and the grande dame of the Berlin fashion scene, Leyla Piedayesh, led her label Lala Berlin to international splendor with the help of 100,000 Instagram followers.

Capital city fashion brands also find digital support in Berlin's lively blogger network. Women like Vreni Frost (neverever.me), Jessica Weiß (journelles.com), Lisa Banholzer and Tanja Trutschnig (bloggerbazaar.com) use their websites and Instagram accounts to promote the entire range of Berlin-based fashion offerings while staying true to the ideas behind "support your local dealer."

The closely networked Instagram scene has produced a regular stream of viral fashion hypes that now shapes the external perception of the "Berlin Look." Such phenomena take their inspiration from the city's vibe, that is, a way of life that continues to make Berlin a place so many people want to be a part of thanks to its club culture, the intellectual bohème, the clash of milieus and mentalities – all of which, taken together, inspire the fashion scene. Issues such as sustainability and fair production are also on the minds of many labels. Plus, Berliner style is never limited to just being

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MALAIKARAISS

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Capital look

"edgy," as they say in the fashion world; it always embodies the city's current zeitgeist as well. Recently, for example, the EUnify hoodie created by the artists collective known as Souvenir made a splash on the internet. The blue sweatshirt features the EU circle of stars with one star missing – a conscious challenge on behalf of the designers to get their fans to reflect on European identity. The hoodie was worn by hip Louis Vuitton designer Virgil Abloh as well as by Germany's Minister of Justice Katarina Barley.

To this day, coolness continues to be the Berlin fashion scene's greatest capital. And, in keeping with its nature, the biggest and most successful trends make do without institutionalized events. In fact, it's possible that the creative drive and ability of Berliners to turn ideas into good business models is thwarted only by too the excesses of well-meaning patronage. Those who rely too much on help from above can end up paralyzing themselves. And even Fashion Council Germany can't afford to offer anything more than help with self-help.

While it's true that many Berlin designers and labels still operate on a small scale, this isn't necessarily a bad omen. On the contrary, the era of large major German fashion brands that helped shape the fate of the international fashion scene is long gone. These days, digitalization offers incredible growth opportunities that are better suited to small and agile startups rather than lumbering corporations.

At the moment, Berlin is witnessing the emergence of a highly modern fashion middle class. The hipster attitude of many other projects should not distract us from this fact. Berlin design is making its way upwards. Taking a number of unexpected detours, it's slowly but successfully staking its claim in the international fashion scene – with a work ethic resting on medium-sized company values and access to good Wi-Fi. And no worries, there are still more than enough parties, pop-up store openings, dinners and panel talks going on outside of the erstwhile Fashion Week schedule – places and spaces where fashion professionals can continue to do their "networking." There's no need to fear that Berlin will run out of events any time soon.

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Perfectly suited

Berlin designer Patrick Hellmann is preparing to take Manhattan

BY CLAUDIA VON DUEHREN

GETTY IMAGES/ANDREAS RENTZ

Patrick Hellmann (middle) with Alec Völkel aka Boss Burns (left) of The BossHoss and Till Lindemann (right) of Rammstein at a Schloßhotel party

German perfection, French charm, Moroccan temperament and American modernity – these are the characteristics Patrick Hellmann (64) uses to describe his own designs. But they are also an apt description of this Berlin designer himself. His father was a Berlin fashion merchant, his mother was Spanish and he was born in Casablanca in 1955. The language spoken at his father's studio was Italian, and the family spoke French at home. When Hellmann was nine years old, his family moved to the United States, and in 1978 they moved to Berlin.

His mother still lives in Cincinnati, and Hellmann is planning to visit her there this month to celebrate her 90th birthday. "For me, it's still like coming home," he explains. Although he holds only a German passport, he does possess a coveted US Green Card. And now, Hellmann is looking to establish even more connections with his former home, this time via business ties.

Having had a shop-within-a-shop at Barneys in Manhattan until the US financial crisis in 2008, Hellmann is eager to return to the city that never sleeps. "The city has an unbelievable positive energy," he gushes, "you can feel it as soon as you get off the plane." Hellmann also sees Los Angeles as a perfect potential location for one of his stores. Of course, he already knows "there's nothing anywhere that doesn't already exist in the US." But he's still convinced that his collection will be able to make a mark on the American fashion market. Indeed, in keeping with the credo of his company, he has "the power of a perfect suit."

With the help of this motto, Hellmann made his way to the top of the fashion industry. He now owns and operates eleven stores from Berlin and London to Moscow, Dubai and Baku, each designed in his characteristic black, white and silver. With the exception of the two in Berlin, all of Hellmann's stores are operated as part of a franchise. Russians even rank his luxury brand PHC label higher than Brioni and Tom Ford.

And now it's time to add a store in the US. The perfect fit of a Hellmann suit makes every man look good: "New Yorkers are very fashionable, so they'll appreciate that," he argues. He himself rarely goes shopping on any of his regular trips to New York. "I always wear the same thing," the designer admits – a black sweater (cotton in summer, cashmere in winter), dark blue jeans, ankle boots – and done. Hellmann is less interested in himself and much more interested in making his clients look their best. Stars like Rammstein lead singer Till Lindemann (56) and German national soccer player Jérôme Boateng (30) are big fans of his work.

Hellmann also recently translated his perfectionist sensibilities to the realm of interior design. In 2017, he bought Berlin's legendary Schlosshotel in the Grunewald, which was built in 1914 and lies in a verdant and elegant part of the city. A number of hotel chains had already tried their luck with the hotel and failed, even though German fashion czar Karl Lagerfeld himself had given it a thorough restyling. It is entirely possible that Hellmann, a successful entrepreneur, assumed the risk for sentimental reasons. Indeed, when he first came to Berlin in 1978, Hellmann was invited shortly thereafter to a reception at the Schlosshotel in the Grunewald: "I immediately fell in love with this wonderful place," recalls the designer.

The Renaissance-style hotel was also where German actress Romy Schneider (1938–1982) got married – twice. And its famous Jugendstil bar was often the last stop of the night for beloved German comedian and enthusiastic drinker Harald Juhnke (1929–2005), who lived just around the corner. In 2006, Germany's national team stayed at the five-star hotel during the Soccer World Cup.

Hellmann has now re-designed 22 of the 53 total rooms and suites (starting at €180/night). He even gave the bar a fresh new outfit: there's herringbone from his suit collection on the chairs, and the curtains feature pinstripes facing out and violet tie-silk facing in – his favorite color. "Each room tells a story taken from my own life," says Hellmann, explaining the personal touch at his exclusive hotel. His international guests appreciate this individuality to such an extent that "some even want to spend every night in a different room," says the hotelier, grinning.

There is only one room at the hotel that Hellmann will most certainly not be redesigning, and that is the personal suite of Karl Lagerfeld. The famed Chanel designer, who passed away in February, equipped the room with personal furniture and art objects. "We are very proud that Karl Lagerfeld set up this suite, and the most we will ever do is refresh it a bit," insists Hellmann, who attaches great importance to maintaining his hotel's reputation for fashion. This coming summer, he also intends to reopen the 5-star hotel's restaurant, Papillon, where upscale international cuisine will be served.

According to Hellmann, his hotel snuggled within the tranquil Grunewald forest is ideal for "guests who want a true sense of privacy." The entrepreneur himself, who lives with his wife and five-year-old son in Berlin-Mitte, has been designing the interiors of private homes for years, and also created the Lalique Suite (€16,000/night) for the five-star Hotel Prince de Galles in Paris. This means there's only one thing this Berlin designer is still missing: "Of course, I would love to redesign a hotel in New York."

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DRAWING ON BERLIN

"I decided in that moment that my next comic book would be about Weimar Berlin, and that it would be 600 pages long." ***Jason Lutes*** tells the story of how he came to write his epic graphic novel on Germany in the last years before Hitler

I graduated from art school in 1991 with no clear idea of what to do with my life. I was interested in "alternative" comic books – which is to say, comic books that were not about superheroes – and I knew that the best-known publisher of such books was based in Seattle, Washington. On the off chance that I could land a job with this publisher, I drove the 3,000 miles from Providence, Rhode Island, to the Pacific Northwest. I had no idea that, in doing so, I was joining a mass migration of recent college graduates who would catalyze Seattle's local music scene into an international phenomenon before stepping into entry-level jobs at Amazon, Adobe and Microsoft.

I landed the job, but swiftly became disillusioned with the comics publishing scene, and after a year I left to work for a free weekly arts and entertainment paper called *The Stranger*. The art director invited me to write and draw a weekly page of comics for the paper, and I jumped at the chance. I knew I wanted to tell a long story, but had no idea how to go about it, so I decided to just make it up as I went. The films of David Lynch, Jim Jarmusch, and Richard Linklater were my touchstones. I chose the title *Jar of Fools* the way a band might choose its name: something enigmatic but suggestive, open to interpretation. After two years, I had written and drawn 128 pages of story, which together formed my first "graphic novel" (a marketing term which had just been coined in hopes of selling more comic books to adults).

Jar of Fools was my self-education in the comics medium. I had read and studied hundreds of comics, but only through making a book-length story myself did I begin to comprehend how text and image in juxtaposition interact to create a unique form of expression, something greater than the sum of its parts. With this newfound knowledge, I was electrified by a sense of possibility – the feeling that comics was a boundless medium, and that I could tell any kind of story I wanted. In my early twenties, I had struggled to find something to say, but now I wanted to say *everything*. What subject could possibly grant me that possibility?

It was in this state of mind that I was flipping through a magazine and happened across a half-page advertisement for a book of photographs called *Bertolt Brecht's Berlin: A Scrapbook of the Twenties*. I foggily recall one line of evocative ad copy: "And the jazz bands played on as the world spun out of control." I knew next to nothing about Berlin in the 1920s, beyond having heard my parents' 1958 double LP of *Die Dreigroschenoper (The Threepenny Opera)* once or twice as a child, and fragments of dodgy VHS copy of the film *Cabaret* as it played in the background during a party back in art school. Despite – or, as I now believe, because of – this lack of understanding, I decided in that moment that my next comic book would be about Weimar Berlin, and that it would be 600 pages long.

It was 1994. I was 26 years old. I did the math and figured, given my rate of production on *Jar of Fools,* that I could wrap up this new project by the time I turned 40.

I mail-ordered *Bertolt Brecht's Berlin* immediately. It was the first of a collection of over a hundred Berlin-centric books I would amass over the following years, as I made weekly rounds of the used-book stores in the greater Seattle area in an effort to acquire every English-language source upon which I could lay my hands. In the map room at the University of Washington, I found the 1928 Pharus Plan of the city, had a copy made and pinned it up over my drawing table. I had quit my day job and was making a go of it as a starving artist, living off meager royalties and freelance work while I consumed book after book, taking notes and making sketches as I went. My goal was to immerse myself in the time and place, to put myself on the streets of the Prussian capital and imagine what it was like to be at ground level while momentous events unfolded in real time. After two years of research, having never set foot in the actual city of Berlin, I felt I was ready to start.

I had come up with two main characters: Kurt Severing, a jaded Berliner and journalist writing for *Die Weltbühne;* and Marthe Müller, an ingenuous young woman from Cologne who has come to study art in the big city. My strategy was to follow these two into the metropolis, improvising the story one scene at a time, peeling off to pursue any secondary characters that interested me, finding my way between the tent-poles of major historical events: Bloody May, the Crash of 1929, the Reichstag elections of 1930.

I had a publisher, and each chapter would be published as an individual comic book. I sent Kurt and Marthe to arrive in Berlin at Potsdamer Bahnhof on a train from the west, and then followed them into the city to see what they would find.

At some time around the year 2000, Carlsen, a publisher out of Hamburg, offered to translate and print *Jar of Fools* in Germany. They invited me over to promote the book at a comics festival in the town of Erlangen and, aware of my work-in-progress, arranged for me to spend a few days in Berlin. At that point, I was roughly 200 pages into the story, and had never set foot in the actual city. I was terrified.

What if the real place was so different from the one in my book that it would render all of my work useless? What if I had been devoting the past six years of my life – writing and drawing in a basement in Seattle, about as far away from Berlin as a person can get – to an elaborate lie? As I boarded the train at Erlangen I felt more and more convinced that I would be shown to be a fraud.

I remember when the first buildings on the outskirts started to drift past by the window. The sun was setting; abandoned industrial buildings were dappled in golden light. Absurdly, I was not prepared for the fact that everything would be in *full color* (my comic is drawn in black-and-white), and in particular how *green* it was. Springtime in Berlin, to someone who has only known the city through old photographs, is astonishing.

I got off the train (as Kurt and Marthe had done in the first chapter of my book) and wandered aimlessly. I was in a heightened state of awareness, where every façade was cut from diamond and the patterns of paving stones were fractals of wonder. There was something in the air – was this the same *Berliner Luft* that people had inhaled in 1930? This place was, of course, very different from the one I had been trying to capture, but also very similar to it. And in that word – "capture" – I recognized the arrogance with which I had undertaken this project. One could never *capture* the vibrancy and complexity of a city so alive.

A sudden gulf opened between my imaginary Berlin and the real Berlin now surrounding me. There was a vast distance between these two places, and in that distance my anxiety evaporated. There was – of course – *no* way I could capture this place, or any place. My Berlin was a city in a shoebox; the real Berlin is alive, infinite and irreducible. I had aspired to create a portrait of the city and its people, but in the wake of that aspiration I began to decipher a self-portrait.

I flew back to Seattle with a sense of relief, intent on staying as true to the real Berlin as I could, but accepting that I would never get it right.

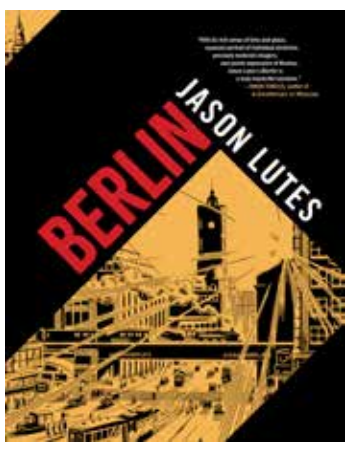
In the end, including those first two years of research, the project took me 24 years to complete. I missed my original deadline by 10 years, drawing the last page a few days before my 50th birthday. The book ends in 1933, with the ascension of Adolf Hitler to the chancellorship, and I wrote and drew that portion in Vermont, while the 2016 presidential election was unfolding. The resonance between the story I was telling and the present-day ascension of authoritarianism was powerful and stupefying. At first I thought it a strange and unfortunate coincidence. Now I'm not so sure.

I chose the subject of Weimar Berlin in 1994, on impulse. With some distance now from the finished book, and through speaking about it in public, I've managed to peel back the layers underlying that impulse. The first thing I came to understand is that what felt like a random decision at the time actually came out of a powerful unconscious need to educate myself about the circumstances leading up to World War II and the Holocaust (an unfortunate void in my poor public school history education). Beneath that, I was trying to come to terms with the (largely) male capacity for dehumanization, oppression and mass slaughter. Beneath that, I was trying to process my own country's history of atrocities, and to what degree I personally am implicated in that history. It turns out that only by looking far away in time and space could I begin to look at myself.

Over all of the years I worked on this book, most of my various studio spaces were subterranean – basement rooms, often windowless. I would make my morning coffee and walk downstairs to write or draw about Berlin between the years 1928 and 1933. I was writing about the Bloody May while the WTO protests of 1999 were happening outside my front door in Seattle; I was writing about the Crash of 1929 during the global financial crisis of 2008; I was writing about the rise of fascism in the late 1920s during the rise of global fascism in our current moment. When I walked down those stairs I was traveling back in time and descending into my own unconscious, but I was also listening.

I don't have any special talent in this regard. I believe anyone able and willing to take the time out of their life to listen can sense the greater trajectory of human civilization. I can draw pictures fairly well, and comics is a narrative art form currently enjoying some popularity, so I'm privileged and fortunate enough to be able to make half a living reporting back from my underground listening post.

The real question now, for me, is what to do with these messages. ■



Berlin, Jason Lutes
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AXEL VÖLCKER (2)

AXEL VÖLCKER

AXEL VÖLCKER

IMAGO

INA SCHOENENBURG/OSTKREUZ

Story!

Story!

My big fat worl

The district in north Berlin is in the process of reinventing itse

BY JULIA BOEK

It's a typical afternoon in Berlin-Wedding, not far from Leopoldplatz. The radiant early-spring sun is shining down, so much so that the Turkish barber has put a rack of wet towels out on the sidewalk to dry. In contrast, the cigarette smoke at Café Morena hangs heavy in the air. Wolle, the tavern's retired proprietor, and Paule, one of his regulars, are drinking their morning beer in the still-empty pub. The huge ashtray on the large table in front of them contains a good dozen cigarette butts, and the radio is blasting saccharine German *Schlager* music. At 12 o'clock sharp, Wolle disappears behind the bar. It's time for his first "blood thinner," as the regulars call their vodka. These men spend their days sitting around together in the tavern, after all, "whadya expect us to do, look out the window the whole time?"

As he lights his next cigarette, Wolle sets out on a journey to the past. He recalls how he opened his tavern here in the early 1970s, after winning it in a gambling match. Its name back then was Sexmuffel II – which can be loosely translated as "Sex Curmudgeon II." Wolle explains that it was an "erotic film bar" that attracted customers from all walks of life in West Berlin, including political party functionaries, workers from the nearby Osram light bulb factory and French soldiers from the Allied barracks at Kurt-Schumacher-Platz. Today, the 82-year-old sports a wide grin at the thought of that bygone era. These days, the clientele at Café Morena is more along the lines of plumbers and construction workers, many of whom show up for their after-work beer. But he also hosts weekly teachers' get-togethers, artists and members of the Left Party.

Today, more than 86,000 people live in the nine-square-kilometer area in northwest Berlin known as Wedding. Once referred to as "red Wedding," the area was a legendary workers' district until it was forced to look on as those jobs moved elsewhere. After World War II, the district became part of the French sector, and Wedding residents soon began receiving a special allowance designed to compensate them for having to live along that East-West death strip known as the Berlin Wall.

In the 1970s, large numbers of so-called *Gastarbeiter* – the German term denoting workers recruited from abroad – moved into the area, especially after Germany and Turkey signed a labor agreement in October 1961. Many of these foreign workers stayed, and even more joined them. These days, people from 165 nations call Wedding their home. In fact, one out of every two residents here has a "migration background."

In the 1980s, a number of big Wedding-based factories, such as AEG, Osram and Rotaprint, closed their doors, most likely because West Berlin's status as an isolated island within East Germany had rendered it unprofitable as a location for industry. Many workers lost their jobs, which meant that all the shops along the large boulevards of Müllerstraße and Badstraße also lost their customers.

The district never quite recovered from that setback. To this day, in some areas you'll still find casinos lining the streets alongside junk shops. Both the unemployment rate and the crime rate are high. And yet, Wedding has started to change. In the past several years, as rents in Berlin's inner-city districts continue their explosion, Wedding has started to see more students, hipsters and young families on its streets. The newcomers have opened up vegan cafés, organic flower shops and hip bars. In fact, Wedding is now even home to a Michelin-starred restaurant and a number of shops belonging to organic supermarket chains.

Wedding encapsulates the world in one urban district. And this isn't just talk, it's an everyday reality, even as some misguided opinion-makers still insist that the coexistence of people of different origins, cultures, religions and mentalities has yet to be tested in this country. In Wedding, this coexistence has been a fact for decades. This is why Wedding is an excellent illustration of the most prominent social phenomena underway in Germany today – and perhaps in Europe, too. These include, for example, issues surrounding migration and integration, the competition for housing, demographic change and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. In other words, the focus is on the fundamental question of how we want to live with one another in the future.

For Les Schliesser, Wedding is a classic *Ankunftsstadt* – arrival city. While it is indeed a very poor district, it is nevertheless a very friendly one that attracts people from all corners of the world. Word is out that all are welcome to try their luck here in the northwest part of the capital. In fact, it's still possible to find affordable space here to rent an apartment or build up a small existence – even if it's getting harder and taking longer these days.

Schliesser is a visual artist and himself a "migrant" from southern Germany. He made his way in the mid-1990s to Berlin-Mitte and later to Wedding. One day back in early 2000, he and fellow artist Daniela Brahm happened upon the stacked concrete cubes that made up the former Rotaprint printing press manufacturer on Gottschedstraße. The 10,000 square-meter site with its 11 factory and office spaces was completely abandoned, except for a couple of tenants. The last small offset printing machine had been taken offline in the late 1980s. Brahm and Schliesser immediately saw the potential of the complex. But they also noticed that many of the nearby residents were welfare recipients who had little access to work or any sort of education or training.

Sitting in his atelier, Schliesser recalls how back in the 2000s, Berlin was forced to sell 6,000 properties to the highest bidder. The Berlin real estate bubble had just burst, property prices were in the dumps and the city was looking to reduce its debt. The Rotaprint complex was also up for sale, and there was already an Icelandic investor on board who wanted to build loft apartments there. What ensued was a true real-estate poker match. The most effective card Schliesser and Brahm had up their sleeves – along with their 11 fellow shareholders in their newly founded gGmbH company – was their idea for a never-before-seen mixed-use concept for the site alongside a sophisticated financing model. In 2007, with the help of an instrument known as the *Erbbaurecht* (heritable building right), which gave the gGmbH a 100-year lease, they were able, together with two foundations, to acquire the former printing press site for €600,000, thus rendering the re-sale of the complex prohibited. The transaction was based on the mutually binding premise of "no profit by ownership." ExRotaprint was born.

IMAGO/JÜRGEN RITTER

HENDRIK LIETMANN/OSTKREUZ

IMAGO/JÜRGEN RITTER

IMAGO/JOKO

ldwide Wedding

elf – with the help of its residents from more than 165 countries

The world in one city district: residents with a multifaceted range of social and cultural backgrounds live side-by-side in an area of north Berlin called Wedding. Together, these people contribute to the district's distinct character, making it a locality brimming with diversity and contrasts. Two such residents are Wolfgang and Anna Dumkow (below left), managers of the Wiesenburg, a protected landmark that began in 1886 as a shelter for homeless women and men and today is a haven for art and culture. Other residents include members of the city's African community, many of whom come from Egypt, Cameroon and Nigeria and gather on Sundays at the Evangelische Freikirchlichen Gemeinde (Evangelical Free Church) to sing gospel songs and recite bible verses to the point of ecstasy. With roughly 5,500 members, Wedding's African community is by far the largest in Berlin.

Journalist Julia Boek and art director and photographer Axel Völcker have been focusing for years on the stories and sensations of everyday life in the district in their magazine *Der Wedding*. In 2017, they took up a new approach to their storytelling, this time based entirely on photographs. To create their illustrated book *Berlin-Wedding – Das Fotobuch* (Berlin-Wedding – The Photobook, from which some of the pictures shown here are taken), they enlisted photographers from Ostkreuz, a well-known Berlin-based agency, to spend a year wandering through the district taking photos in bars, living rooms, mosques, studios and the job center.

ESPEN EICHHÖFER/OSTKREUZ

Looking back, Schliesser is convinced that their success can be a role model for how to approach Berlin's urban development in a manner that doesn't revolve around profit. In his words, their approach is "proof that renters can refurbish and develop a complex by themselves by means of self-management." Today, he co-manages ExRotaprint's business operations with Brahm. The complex is at 100-percent capacity and several of the site's buildings – all of which are now historically protected monuments – have been refurbished with the help of two architects, a building loan and income from rent.

The co-managers rent out the space based on a strict allocation philosophy: one-third of tenants are tradespeople, including carpenters and the like; the second third are organizations that perform social work, such as a German school for migrants; and the final third of the space is rented out to artists and creatives, including ateliers and 17 rehearsal rooms for musicians.

"The district desperately needs jobs, educational opportunities and social support," says Schliesser. By making specific choices when it comes to renting out their space, he explains, they can decide who sets up shop on their site and how Wedding can profit from their work. These days, their vision of a non-profit real estate company – the ExRotaprint team refers to itself as a "social sculpture" – has become more important than ever. Even in Wedding, money is now starting to play an increasingly large role, as Schliesser is well aware. In some places, rents have increased fourfold within a year, and the gentrifying tendency of pushing out people with less money has long since been underway.

In the small dressmaking shop for women's and children's clothing Cosa on the ground floor of a residential building on Tegeler Straße, Nuray Anadolu and her 24-year-old daughter Ipek Yeşildağ are very busy these days. April is a very popular month for Muslim weddings. Ramadan is in May this year, which means no one marries in that month. Hoş geldiniz! Welcome to Turkish Wedding! Or maybe it would be more accurate to say "Welcome to German-Turkish Wedding!" Indeed, just like in the districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln, the Anatolians are among those Berliners who have lived in Wedding the longest.

Anadolu moved to Wedding in 1992, and her daughter Ipek was born in the district. A professional fashion tailor from western Turkey, Anadolu sports a very fashionable bob, her hair is dyed purple and she has a tattoo on her lower arm. Wedding is her home. It's where she can speak Turkish to people from her home country on every corner; it's where she can celebrate Muslim holidays with members of her community; and it's also where she can find mosques right in her neighborhood. And even though she spends most of her time in her sewing shop, she's quick to note that these surroundings give her tremendous strength.

And yet, living alongside her compatriots presents certain challenges and complications. As the 48-year-old Anadolu points out, many of the older people, especially those from eastern Turkey, are highly conservative. "They stay among themselves, only visit Turkish doctors, go to Turkish supermarkets and even keep a distance from other Muslims," she says. And by "other Muslims," she means women such as Nuray Anadolu and Ipek Yeşildağ, that is, women who don't wear headscarves yet still pray to Allah for several minutes every night before going to bed.

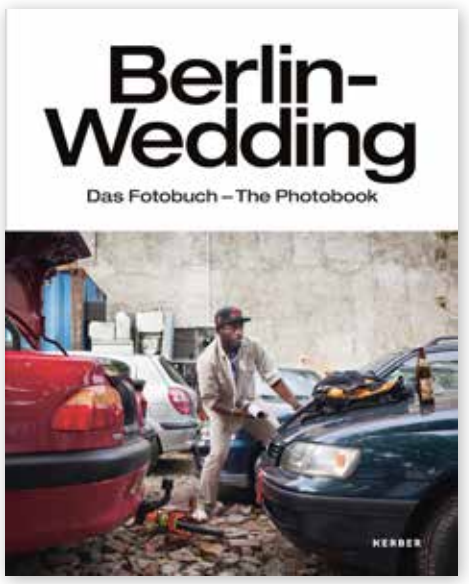
Religion and politics are themes that both women try to keep out of their fashion business. After all, there are so many other things to talk about. "Tradition or not, Turkish weddings are total bling bling," says Ipek, whose name translates as "silk." For most of the brides who come to the mother-daughter duo, the women create baroque "Sisi-type" dresses with lots of tulle, rhinestones and lace, as well as matching dresses for the bridesmaids. Up to 10 women – mothers, sisters and aunts – have been known to come into their workspace to discuss every detail of the bride's dress.

Anadolu recalls that her own wedding, which took place in Turkey in the early 1990s, was also a large-scale affair; however, it was an event the then 21-year-old didn't have much of a say in.

She has since divorced her husband. Indeed, her life path – which took her from the position of textile workshop manager at a Berlin-based company to her current status as a businesswoman who says what she thinks and makes her own decisions – did not jibe with her ex-husband's image of women. "After 17 years of marriage, it was a difficult decision to divorce," says Anadolu, sighing, yet with a look of satisfaction. Her daughter Ipek will soon be completing her BA in fashion management and hopes to join her mother's business at some point. For Nuray Anadolu and Ipek Yeşildağ, the district of Wedding is the perfect place to pursue a good life based on traditional values and a self-determined future.

Wolle, the 82-year-old pub owner, also foresees a dazzling future for Wedding. He even goes as far as to predict "a cultural revolution." There are more and more well-educated people moving to the district, he says. For his own part, he'd like to stay "until they have to carry me out." That makes sense, seeing as Wolle was born in his grandfather's Schultheiss pub just a few blocks away.

Julia Boek is co-publisher of *Berlin-Wedding – The Photobook*.



For more information, visit
www.derwedding.de/das-buch

AXEL VÖLCKER

Story!

IMAGO/NORDPHOTO

Fan lingo: U.N.V.E.U. – short for (in German): And never forget: Iron Union.

Union representatives

Union Berlin is a soccer club of underdogs, but only the well-behaved, honest and open-minded kind

BY ANNETT GRÖSCHNER

It's a Saturday afternoon in late March. Our destination is a home game at the Alte Försterei stadium, deep in the east of Berlin. The further the S-Bahn takes us in the direction of Köpenick, the more crowded it gets, and the more red-and-white scarves and other gear we see on fans of the 1. FC Union Berlin soccer team. The atmosphere is relaxed, and the crowd is made up mostly of older men interspersed by all variations of red-and-white striped families and their kids. Women are definitely outnumbered, but they nevertheless have a presence here. All the parking spaces around the stadium are full and the S-Bahn trains are bursting at their seams, as are the trams. The exit at S-Bahnhof Köpenick station is too narrow for the masses of people, but the police are relaxed, standing at their post next to the sausage stand in the station. Today's opposing team is SC Paderborn 07, a worthy opponent, but not a team known for its rabid fans. Things are quite different when a team like SV Dynamo Dresden travels to the stadium; those games require an increased level of security.

1. FC Union Berlin is known for its working-class tradition and underdog status but also for its sense of solidarity and spirit of political resistance – that reaches back to the days of the divided city. And there's always something to these labels, even if many elements of the team's reputation have already become the stuff of myth, including the legend of the 11 locksmiths on the field and the battle cry "Eisern Union" (iron union). At 1. FC Union, every player is a soccer god. Union represents the east, too, and above all Köpenick, the city district whose sheer obstinacy was able to preserve its municipal autonomy well into the 20th century. It also stands for a deep-rooted Berlin dialect that no one on the other side of Berlin speaks anymore.

The Alte Försterei's location at the edge of a wooded area called the Wuhlheide means that the path to each home game is part of a ritual that includes a walk through the forest. In the past, the walk back from the stadium was often the march of a losing team, sometimes even of a sorely beaten one. As the Union joke goes: "When god created the world, he spoke to the stones and said: 'Do you want to become Unioners?' And the stones said 'Yes, but we're not hard enough.' "

Back in the GDR, Union was an "elevator team," that is, a team that went up and down between the first and second leagues, while their much-hated East Berlin rival, BFC Dynamo, the favorite club of the Minister of State Security, won one championship after the next. Suffice it to say that there were often what you might call "inconsistencies" at play in that era. These days, Dynamo plays in a division two leagues below Union.

In 1968, Union had one of the first women's soccer teams in both Germanys. This was at a time when women in West Germany were still kept from playing soccer in clubs due to the preposterous idea that women's bodies and souls would suffer if they did – and because such public displays of their bodies would supposedly offend standards of decency and propriety. In East Berlin, this brought about great mirth and shaking of heads.

For their part, the fate of Union's men's team serves to illustrate many of the upheavals of the postwar period in East Berlin: relegation, ascent, renewed relegation down to the fourth division, debt, the struggle to stay alive and a brush with bankruptcy. The same was true for the fans, too, many of whom were well-educated and skilled workers. After the two Germanys unified, 22,000 jobs were lost at the nearby Oberschöneweide industrial area, the equivalent of one full Union stadium. With them went the livelihood of entire families. The career paths of some of Union's older fans also mirror this experience: pre-reunification training in shift-based systems at large-scale GDR factories, unemployment after the fall of the Wall, various transitional jobs, some even outside of Germany, re-training, additional training, jobs at companies that went bankrupt, failure to be paid by dodgy entrepreneurs – the whole kit and caboodle.

Even if your entire existence is wavering, the stadium at the Alte Försterei remains a reliable home

Soccer is a great anchor, though. Even if your entire existence is wavering, the stadium at the Alte Försterei remains a reliable home, no matter what division the team is in. Union fans now come from all over. There's even a "Union in English" online portal for English-speaking enthusiasts.

Much has been said about the undying love Union fans hold for their club: they donated blood and gave the proceeds to the club; they emptied their piggy banks to purchase shares in the team; they refurbished the stadium themselves; and they invented the often-copied annual Christmas Caroling event at the stadium, which 30,000 people attend every year on Dec.23. Nowadays, Union fans even buy pricy beer in their stadium.

However, the bonds that tie the club to its fans are occasionally put to the test. Having made an official commitment to tolerance and open-mindedness, the club and its economic council have implemented a number of programs, including a job network for refugees, that have not been well-received by all Union fans. Yet when an anonymous fan made anti-Semitic comments online about the Ingolstadt player Almog Cohen just a few weeks ago, the response was unanimous in its condemnation. The club reacted immediately and called on Union fans to fight all forms of racism.

People still disagree when it comes to determining the best Union era. Was it when the team still played for only 600 people and fans could sit on the curbstones and chat? Or is it better today, when almost every game is sold out and there are almost as many club members as seats in the stadium? Either way, the thing that matters most is something else, and it can be summarized as follows: "We're not going to just any soccer game, we're going to Union."

1. FC Union Berlin has been playing in the second division since 2009. At the moment, the club is in third place, which means their ascent to the first division, the Bundesliga, is entirely possible. This also means people in Berlin are increasingly hearing the typical Union phrase "Scheiße, wir steigen auf!" (Shit, we're moving up!). It's a statement that perfectly captures Union fans' ambivalence toward reaching a higher division. After all, what happens when big companies get involved and start making their own decisions for the team?

On this particular Saturday, as before all games, fans add the word "Fußballgott!" (soccer god!) after each player's name is announced over the loudspeaker. This time, however, they have an extra "Fußballgott" for the Paderborn coach, Steffen Baumgart, a former Union captain. Fans don't forget things like that here. Even when Baumgart's Paderborn team manages to put a stop to Union's 20-game undefeated streak – in their own stadium, of all places – Union fans celebrate their former captain anyway.

Annett Gröschner is a novelist and professor of journalism at the University of Arts Berlin – and a passionate fan of Union Berlin.

The turn of a century

Why Berlin should apply to host the 2036 Olympic Games

BY FRANK BACHNER

It was a happy and joyful big-time sports event. "A time to make friends" was the motto of the 2006 Soccer World Cup in Germany. The stadiums were full, the weather was sunny for weeks and the German fans were giddy despite their team losing in the semi-finals.

The world saw a very tolerant, empathetic country that summer, and there could soon be an opportunity for it to happen again. Berlin's Senator for the Interior and Sport, Andreas Geisel, has proposed that Berlin apply to host the 2036 Summer Olympics – with the added symbolic significance of being one hundred years after the Nazis turned the 1936 games into an ignominious propaganda campaign.

As of yet, there are but musings, yet the potential push to host the games is already proving divisive. Udo Wolf, the chairman of the Left Party delegation in Berlin's parliament considers the idea "a bad joke." Berlin's Senator for Justice, Dirk Behrendt, of the Green Party is also strongly opposed.

This is all understandable. By 1936, Hitler's terror regime had been in operation for three years. One year earlier, the Nuremberg Race Laws had downgraded Jews to second-class citizens, and opponents of the regime were already disappearing to concentration camps. The dictator exploited the Olympic Games, which had been awarded to Germany in 1931, as a propaganda platform without equal. The largest sporting event on the planet was intended to show the world that Germany was a peace-loving, economically aspiring country. And now, a hundred years later, the idea has been floated for the Olympic Games to take place again in the very stadium where Hitler once lorded over the competition from his privileged box? In this epic architectural monument to Nazi megalomania?

Quite a few people would agree with Geisel and Wolf. But their views are short sighted. It might even be desirable to draw parallels to 1936. The result could only be that Germany is found to be a peaceful, cosmopolitan country – as the world already experienced at the Soccer World Cup in 2006. 2036 would simply be a continuation of that.

This is true, however, only under precisely the condition that history is never to be forgotten; it is imperative that the victims are remembered appropriately. It would be a fatal flaw for Germany to present itself as a country for which National Socialism is a mere historical footnote.

The decision-makers in this country and the absolute majority of society are set to carry out this process. Thomas Härtel, president of the Berlin Sport Federation, set the tone: "One hundred years after the Olympic Games of 1936 is the right date to again confront the eventful history of our country. By looking back, we can set an example as to how far Germany has come in its development into a democratic, peaceful and cosmopolitan country." Kaweh Niroomand, a native of Iran and vice president of the German Olympic Sports Federation, has a similar argument. "1936 is a sensitive topic," he admits. "But it is also a huge opportunity, especially at this time, to present our democratic country as an antithesis to what it was 100 years ago.

Frank Bachner is a metro editor for the Berlin daily *Der Tagesspiegel*.

RAH! TALENT!

A company is founded every 20 minutes in Berlin

BY MAGDALENA THIELE

Daniel Stammler and Janosch Sadowksi came to Berlin by way of Karlsruhe, the city in southwest Germany where they founded Kolibri, their gaming startup. Stammler and Sadowski see the town as having been an ideal springboard for their business, especially thanks to its proximity to the Karlsruhe Institute for Technology (KIT) and all the creative minds studying there. "However, in order to take things to the next level, we had to move to Berlin," says Sadowksi. "For one thing, a large part of the German games industry is at home in Berlin; and then after the move, it was much easier to fill our job vacancies with great international talent. Berlin has a completely unique pull on people."

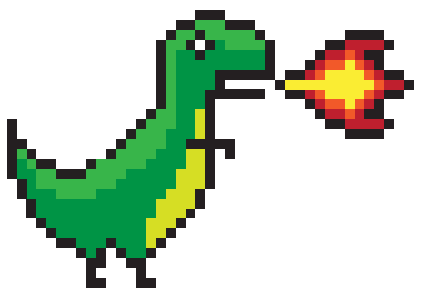
As has been the case for several other startups, Germany's capital city provided Kolibri its stomping grounds. The company's turnover is now roughly €100,000 per day, half of which is generated through advertising. "Our move to Berlin was one of the best decisions we ever made," says Stammler.

Berlin is still a magnet for young companies and, above all, for young talent. This fact was proved once again in the latest Berlin Startup Monitor (BSM), an annual study published by the German Startups Association in cooperation with Google for Entrepreneurs. The findings of the study are based on the German Startup Monitor, which surveys 1,550 startups and their 3,763 founders and 18,000 employees.

The latest figures show that Berlin remains Germany's startup hotspot. At 15.8 percent, Berlin is home to more than twice as many startups as Hamburg, the number two among startup cities in Germany, at 7.2 percent. Berlin also leads the nation in terms of the percentage of women employed at startups, although 16.2 percent is still far too low. The typical Berlin founder is male, in his mid-30s and holds a university degree in business or economics.

Although the formerly divided city of Berlin is often described as "unfinished," it continues to attract people for a number of reasons, two of which are its sheer diversity and openness to newcomers. This is also reflected in the overall employee structure at startups. As the BSM notes, "A glance at the origins of employees at young companies in the capital shows that almost 50 percent are foreign-born, which makes Berlin considerably more internationally oriented than most other regions in Germany."

Kolibri co-founders Stammler and Sadowski have no doubt that Berlin will continue its reign as Germany's startup capital. The many networks and institutions created there to support founders and young companies will further consolidate this status, they argue. However, young founders throughout Germany – and in Berlin, too – are quick to complain about the complicated nature of local bureaucracy, in particular when it comes to hiring foreign workers. According to the BSM, for roughly two-thirds of all founders, acquiring visas is a particularly difficult challenge, and many lose whatever remaining patience they may have when confronted with all the social security conditions and provisions.



And yet, Berlin continues to draw large numbers of people. What does the city have that others don't? "International flair and a big-city atmosphere on the one hand, and the familiarity of each distinct urban neighborhood on the other," explains Stammler. He also notes that Berlin's large pool of employees – particularly in the tech scene – makes the city "entirely unique on both a personal and an entrepreneurial level." All of this in spite of the fact that Berlin weather is often gray and Berliners themselves quite gruff, says Sadowski, with a grin. What matters to him much more: "We've been able to triple the size of our team since we moved here."

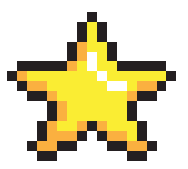
Yet another factor that should not be overlooked is the fact that there's good beer to be had in Berlin. "We were astonished to discover that people in Berlin like to drink Rothaus, which is a beer from our home town. Rothaus will always have a special place in our fridge at Kolibri Games." And it's true – even when it comes to food, Berlin is better known for its international cuisine than for its local dishes.

"Berlin's got a buzz," says Jan-Niklas Schroers, associate director and team leader office agency at property consultant Savills in Berlin. Schroers backs up his claim by noting that the capital city has a pleasant business climate and a myriad of opportunities, plus the cost of living is not nearly as high as that seen in other European cities. He also explains that while the German capital is not yet a tech hub, it is most definitely a talent hub, a trend that fuels the city's rapid ongoing development – in Berlin, a new company is founded every 20 minutes.

Berlin can already claim to be Germany's strongest FinTech location. All the big players, including the online banks Solaris and N26, the company builder Finleap and the FinTech ventures Lendico and Fundingcircle, are based in Berlin. Even Rocket Internet, the company considered to be the pioneer among startup launchers, grew out of Berlin.

It is fascinating that even 30 years after the fall of the Wall, the German capital is still "unfinished" and "unorganized." But it appears to be precisely this state of affairs that makes Berlin so interesting. "In general, I think it's very good – even exciting – to be 'unfinished' as a city and economic space," argues Schroers. "It opens up so many more opportunities for young and aspiring individuals than an established and less permeable structure would. Right now in Berlin, anything is possible."

But these things alone will not be enough for Berlin to maintain its leading status in the long run amid competition from other international cities, notes Schroers. He argues that Berlin is going to have to expand its infrastructure, particularly by means of a major international airport – or even two international airports, if necessary (and if the local business community has its say). At the same time, however, Berlin will have to maintain that inimitable "unfinished" charm. As Schroers puts it: "Become a new Bay Area but still keep that Kreuzberg spirit. That's the challenge in a nutshell."



Magdalena Thiele is a freelance economics journalist based in Berlin.

Playing for the future

Time to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Berlin's Young Euro Classic festival – as well as a number of former participants who've made it big

BY PETER UEHLING

One of the most successful concepts in classical music is turning 20 this year. Back in 2000, the youth orchestra festival known as the Young Euro Classic (YEC) took place for the first time ever in Berlin. From that first year onwards, the YEC team under Gabriele Minz was able to fill the Konzerthaus am Gendarmenmarkt to the brim almost every evening – with performances by well-known German and international youth orchestras, but also by lesser-known regional ensembles. The festival takes place each year in the final weeks of Berlin's official theater holidays, which means it profits from having fewer cultural events to compete with as well as from the sheer charisma of the youth orchestras themselves. Far from the service-oriented mentality of some professional orchestras, these young musicians inevitably play with a special intensity and give audiences hope that this youthful élan will be preserved in the future. The suggestive slogan of the Young Euro Classic is "Hier spielt die Zukunft," which can be loosely translated as "This is where the future plays."

But what does that future actually look like? In other words, what happens to young musicians after they've performed at Young Euro Classic? If one is looking to portray the festival's success at promoting young talent, then oboist Viola Wilmsen is the poster child. After winning competitions for her trumpet playing and also displaying her talent for piano and vocals, Wilmsen chose to study the oboe in Lübeck and later in Paris and Berlin. While still in secondary school, she played in the German National Youth Orchestra, and later, while at university, in the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie. As part of the orchestra's participation in the YEC starting in 2004, Wilmsen held the position of solo oboist. In 2010, she became solo oboist in the orchestra of Berlin's Deutsche Oper, and three years later she was named solo oboist at the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester, one of Germany's best. For many musicians, this would be enough of a career and plenty to keep them busy; but Wilmsen also performs regularly as a soloist in oboe concerts, plays chamber music in several ensembles and has even recorded CDs with them.

When asked to what extent Young Euro Classic contributed to her success, Wilmsen describes a more indirect impact: "Participating in the YEC has a mostly indirect effect on players," she argues. "I think what's most important is the sense of achievement and positive feedback one gets from conductors in youth orchestras. That's what gave me strength and motivated me on my path to becoming a professional musician." As she notes further, the pressure and excitement of performing at the Konzerthaus in Berlin and in a series with other youth orchestras acted as an "incentive to be especially well-prepared and to give absolutely everything in every concert."

Youth orchestras indeed gain motivation by performing in famous concert halls, but most of all they benefit from the experience of working with established conductors. Students studying orchestra conducting can also learn a lot, for example, by working as assistants. Up-and-coming conductor Kerem Hasan, who was born in London in 1992, accompanied the European Union Youth Orchestra (EUYO) on its tours starting in 2012, and also played in Berlin. At the time, he was studying piano and conducting in Glasgow and played piano in the orchestra, but mostly he worked as an assistant to conductors Dirk Brossé, Krzystof Urbański and Thomas Søndergard. His work as an assistant involved such tasks as checking the tonal balance of the instruments and rehearsing works with individual orchestra groups.

Although a young conductor can learn a lot by engaging in such work, it won't make him famous. According to Hasan, Young Euro Classic was less important for his career than his work with the EUYO, with whom he also rehearsed independently starting in 2014. Ultimately, what was most decisive were his achievements at various competitions: after pursuing his studies further in Weimar and Zurich, Hasan was a finalist in 2016 at the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition in London and was named associate conductor of the Welsh National Opera. As a winner of the renowned Young Conductors Award at the Salzburger Festspiele, he was also appointed to the position of principal conductor of the Tiroler Symphonieorchester Innsbruck. But Hasan will only take up that position starting in the fall, because for the current season, he is still studying as an assistant under Bernard Haitink in Chicago and Amsterdam.

The Young Euro Classic most likely exerts its strongest promotional impact on behalf of composers, rather than for young orchestra members. Almost all youth orchestras perform a new work by a composer from their home country, which then competes with others for the European Composers Prize decided by a public jury. In 2015, the National Youth Symphony Orchestra of Turkey presented the work "Hafriyat – Earthwork" by the then-30-year-old composer Sinem Altan. Of the three musicians presented here, she is the only one who mentions the Young Euro Classic on her CV. This speaks volumes on the varying importance of participation in the YEC.

ANNA KLEMM

Viola Wilmsen

DPA/TAGESSPIEGEL

Sinem Altan

It should be noted that Sinem Altan was already well-known before she got involved in the Young Euro Classic. In her home country of Turkey, her talents were noticed and fostered as a young girl and she came to Berlin at the age of 11 to study piano and composition at the Hochschule für Musik. At the age of 23, she wrote the first of now four works for Berlin's Neuköllner Oper, and one year later she oversaw family concerts with intercultural undertones at the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, for which she also composed several musical dramatic works. Fostering dialogue between German and Turkish culture is the idea behind her chamber music ensemble Olivinn; for example, they perform Schubert's "Winterreise" using Turkish instruments. Her work also involves a tangible turn toward the public, and she is currently working as the musical director of the Gorki Theater in Berlin. So, as important as it was for her to win the European Composers Award – previous recipients include Magnus Lindberg, Niels Klein and Agata Zubel – Sinem Altan's schedule of engagements was already full before she received the composers' prize.

In other words, the benefits of taking part in Young Euro Classic remain relatively minimal for individual musicians. Viola Wilmsen notes that the event fails to support the networking of musicians from different orchestras and cultures. Still, the competitive nature of the festival has prompted the youth orchestras to reach breathtaking heights of musical quality; for example, Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps," which required tremendous effort to play 100 years ago, is now easily mastered by regional youth orchestras. Indeed, modern music education plays a decisive role in the upswing in performance and quality, and the developments fostered by the Young Euro Classic also serve to inspire individual musicians to reach new heights.

Peter Uehling is a music critic for the daily *Berliner Zeitung*. This year's Young Euro Classic will take place in Berlin from July 19 to Aug. 6.