

Deutsche Akademie der Darstellenden Künste (German Academy of Performing Arts)

Radio Play of the Month January 2020

Statement of the Jury

"Don't try to be a hero when you're weak!" This is just one of the many clever sentences that remain in your memory from the radio play "Die Toten haben zu tun - الموتى مشغولون" by Mudar Alhaggi and Wael Kadour. The radio play of the month January 2020 combines aesthetic quality and social relevance at an impressively high level. One would like to hear such multi-perspective pieces based on experience! The original radio play, produced by Deutschlandfunk and translated from Arabic by Larissa Bender, allows those who are usually only the object of debate in Germany and Europe at present to have their say: Like their protagonist Taha, the two Syrian authors live in political exile in Berlin and Paris. In their radio play, they tell the story of the special friendship between the Syrian Taha and the German Mira in a vivid and very sensitive way. Mira first appears as the supposedly strong one who helps the refugee who seems helpless at first sight. However, the friendship increasingly develops into a relationship on equal terms and the initial role allocation turns out to be deceptive.

Taha talks about the political repression in his country of origin and his grief at the failure of the democratic awakening in the Arab world, in which he was actively involved. In this way, the protagonist steps out of the role of victim and meets us as an acting subject. Despite all the melancholy, Taha's disarmingly ironic handling of the exile situation is impressive: he reports that he has to divide his time between dealing with the authorities and mourning, "so that I could neither be active nor depressed ... I became a refugee." However, the radio play not only deals with the traumas of the survivors and their feelings of guilt towards the dead, it also subtly questions the categories of heroism and cowardice, strength and weakness - to name but a few of the challenging discourses the play opens up.

In order to tell the sad and very emotional story of Taha and Mira, the authors Mudar Alhaggi and Wael Kadour interweave different stylistic forms from reportage to diary notes to puppet theatre, which Taha played in the Lebanese refugee camp and from which a "story within the story" emerges in the play. This is just one wonderful example of the formal qualities that distinguish the text and its staging as a whole. With the speakers Rami Khalaf, Yvon Jansen and Sebastian Rudolph and under the direction of Erik Altorfer, the play unfolds on a high level of narration. It is especially worth mentioning that the original Arabic text is also audible in the play. This is a particularly successful directorial idea, as it supports the change of perspective in the play: For short moments during this radio play, the German-speaking radio audience finds itself for a change in the situation of strangeness and disorientation that is part of everyday life for people on the run. The direction also opens up a new imaginary space through the precisely dosed use of voice effects for each scene. This enables a sensual listening experience without falling into forced realism. The leitmotivic use of the original music composed by Martin Schütz and the courageous use of stereophony highlights the characters' inner conflict in a plausible yet unobtrusive way.

<https://www.darstellendekuenste.de/id-2020-224.html>