



Caritasverband für  
das Erzbistum Berlin e.V.

Unter der Schirmherrschaft des Regierenden Bürgermeisters von Berlin, Klaus Wowereit

“Old, small and shaky”. This was the answer of a child when asked what an opera was. By mixing up the words “Oper” (engl. opera) and “Opa” (engl. granddad) the child’s answer indicates how unknown the *opera* is for many children. However, through its dramatic transformation of themes such as force, liberty, hate, love, and many other human feelings, the *opera* can serve as a bridge for children to classical music.

In the urban district *Frankfurter Allee Süd* in Berlin Lichtenberg, a high-rise apartment estate with a compact housing construction, the *Caritasverband* has initiated a children’s opera: *Sternzeit F:A:S*. The main aim of the project was to bring children, aged between seven and twelve, closer to the world of the opera in an artistic and creative process. Only a few of the children attending school in that area had become in contact with classical music before.

The idea of a children’s opera was realised as an integrative district project by the cooperation of two schools, two youth centres for children, the Catholic Church St. Mauritius and the community centre. With the help of prominent partner the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden* this project became reality: Now the *opera* literally entered the children’s neighbourhood by members of staff from the opera who came to *Frankfurter Allee Süd*. *Opera* became concrete for kids, reached them in their environment, in their school and in their leisure centre. *Sternzeit* became a topic in their families.

120 children practised under the professional instruction of music, dance and theatre pedagogues from the *Staatsoper*, accompanied by educators and social pedagogues from the *Caritasverband* for more than a year. The youth centre *Steinhaus* was converted into the children’s opera house. At the same time, two elementary schools became rehearsal stages. The collective aim to be able to stand on a big stage in May 2010 encouraged every child in its individual ambition. This aim helped to strengthen the kid’s self-confidence and their ability to concentrate, as well as it helped them to develop fantasy and team competence. As time drew by, they took the project into their own hands. The children made themselves familiar with important aspects of the opera such as music, theatre, dance, décor, costumes and make-up.

I am entirely sure that the children who were part of *Sternzeit* experienced joy and satisfaction while meeting the world of the opera. They have gained competences which will help them to overcome any timidity towards classical music and which might even encourage them to play a musical instrument themselves.

*Sternzeit F:A:S* can be seen as an creative process based on classical music that has reached its aim to connect different institutions in the district *Frankfurter Allee Süd* as well as to unite all participants in an artistic and cultural way. The children’s opera has also helped to converge different people in the neighbourhood.

The production process of the children’s opera *Sternzeit F:A:S* became a response-project to the premier of “L’etoile”, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle at the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden*.

Regina Lux-Hahn/ Initiator and project head of the Children’s Opera *Sternzeit F:A:S*

