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Lewerenz, Susann: Geteilte Welten. Exotisierte Unterhaltung und Artist*innen of Color in Deutschland 1920–1960, 504 S., Böhlau, Köln u. a. 2017.

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Susann Lewerenz's first monograph, published in 2006, was a detailed and perceptive study of the Deutsche Afrika-Schau. The Afrika-Schau, a travelling exhibition in which people of colour performed exoticism, had its roots in a longer history of Völkerschauen, or human zoos, and its immediate origins in an initiative on the part of an Afro-German impresario. Between 1936 and 1940 it was instrumentalised by National Socialist agencies with the twin aims of maintaining the surveillance and control of Germany's small black population and of promoting the colonial idea among white Germans. Significantly, one reason for its dissolution was that neither the 'exotic' performers nor their white audiences bought the fiction that the people on the stage were foreigners.

"Geteilte Welten" builds on Lewerenz's previous work and shares its strengths: It is fully informed by the key theoretical and methodological approaches that have shaped the study of constructions of race and the exotic in Europe and the Atlantic world, and indeed one of its purposes is to show how exotic performance offered its audiences persuasive visions of a global order that underpinned national identity. At the same time (and more interestingly) it reflects the author's commitment to understanding the subjective experiences of the performers themselves and the materiality of their daily lives, identifying the constraints within which they operated and their scope for action under changing circumstances. It is thus sensitive to the dynamics of race and gender, and open to examples of ambivalence—like those interactions between Afrika-Schau performers and audiences that confounded the Nazis. And it is based on solid empirical research in which the acknowledged and unavoidable gaps in the sources are dealt with imaginatively, providing a wealth of new data.

Lewerenz explains that this book began with her desire to situate the mainly African-heritage performers of the Afrika-Schau more firmly in both their own biographies—a black German community—and in a wider community (she uses the term advisedly) of exotic and exoticised performers. Thus, while the experience of National Socialism (and of black performers within it) remains at the centre of the book, the author widens the chronological frame in order to explore longer-term experiences and assess the impact of successive political regimes on performers'

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lives. Looking specifically at the popular forms of variety theatre, circuses and fairground and similar shows, she also broadens the number and range of individual stories, to include performers of Asian and other non-European descent. And she goes deeper in mapping and exploring performance milieux; she argues persuasively that a grounded understanding of those milieux and social interactions within them is key to understanding the lives of racialised and exoticised people in twentieth-century Germany, since performance spaces were so often the only ones in which they were unambiguously welcome. Although the frame and focus of the book are thus very German, with Germany defined largely in political terms, "Geteilte Welten" is also a welcome contribution to the emerging scholarship on the transnational and transformative dimensions of black performance in the Atlantic world.

The book's eight substantive chapters fall into four chronological sections. A chapter on the Wilhelmine period sets the scene, analysing the emergence of exotic performance on a significant scale in the context of the establishment of Germany's colonial empire. In this phase, Lewerenz argues, the racist impulses implicit in an emerging "koloniale visuelle Kultur" (S. 65) were often undercut by an early professionalisation associated with tendentially globalised performance networks, including performers and performance styles arriving from the United States. The following chapter, on the Weimar period, begins with an exploration of black musical performance in the field of tension between post-colonial racism and the positive reception of American (jazz) culture, and then examines the post-World War I revival of the Völkerschau. There, the increase in the number of troupes organised by immigrants themselves reflected, paradoxically, the general proletarianisation of racialised and ex-colonial minorities. Four chapters, fully half the book, cover National Socialism, going beyond now familiar data about state policies of control and exclusion to explore areas of ambivalence, evasion and even mutual mimicry enabled by inherent tensions in the purposes and structures of the Nazi system, which Lewerenz tellingly characterises with such terms as "prekäre 'Nischen'" (S. 212), "ethnic drag" (S. 304) and "die brüchigen Grenzen des Kolonialen" (S. 326). The final chapter considers popular entertainment in East and West Germany in the 1950s, asking how representations of the exotic might have contributed to constructions of post-National Socialist identity. Here the conclusions are relatively unsurprising: colonial motifs survived unchallenged in West Germany but not in the East, and both witnessed a renewed reception of African-American models in spite of official disapproval. In this section, the richness of empirical detail about the performers which characterises the whole book is the strongest feature.

At just over 450 pages of text, this is a long book, but no space is wasted. There are 37 black and white illustrations, well selected and largely unpublished before now. The text itself is extremely readable, and the inclusion of an extensive critical apparatus adds to the book's usefulness. An extensive index containing the names of individuals and institutions (associations, circuses, performance venues) significantly enhances its value as a resource for the developing historiographies of people of colour and the spheres in which they operated.