

Diversity under threat

The far right is into folk

Over the last couple of decades, the balfolk scene has become more and more progressive; it's hard for some of us to believe that members of the far right feel comfortable at our events.

However, traditional music and dances have obvious appeal to nationalist groups, and can be a space for them to find new recruits - especially in countries where there is a history of repressive regimes adopting traditional music for their own purposes. It's not just a thing of the past: there are currently far-right groups in Germany which perform traditional music and dances at their demonstrations.⁴

The Anastasia cult at balfolk festivals

Current politics are trending towards the far right; unfortunately, this is also affecting the balfolk scene. Recently we've noticed followers of the far-right, antisemitic Anastasia cult at several balfolk festivals in Germany and Europe. The Anastasia movement traces its ideology back to Vladimir Megre's books, "The Ringing Cedars", which are marked by antisemitism, racism, sexism, and conspiracy theories.¹ The movement also has proven ties to neonazi groups.²

As of yet, members of the Anastasia cult haven't caused any problems at balfolk festivals. However, this can be understood as part of the movement's strategy. The public broadcaster RBB reports:

Frank Ludwig, from Brandenburg, who calls himself "Heir-of-the-Ancestors Germania", gives talks to members of the Anastasia movement all over Germany. He called upon his followers to create "something beautiful", and to "charm" people through song, clothing, and dance; "if you make the people love you, then no politician, no dark power can say: they are evil."³

Our position

We cannot allow prejudice at our events.

We are against racism, antisemitism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and all other forms of identity-based discrimination. We oppose the oversimplification of complex issues, the scapegoating, and the conspiracy theories which stir up hatred against Jews and other minorities.



We stand for leftwing values, intersectional feminism, solidarity, and a nuanced understanding of the world. We want to build a strong balfolk scene where everyone can participate and feel safe; where everyone can decide for themselves who they want to dance with, whether they lead or follow, and what they wear when they go dancing.

It's clear that rightwing nationalists are moving in on the balfolk scene. We're going to make sure that they don't get comfortable here.

Safe spaces - who for?

Excluding groups with specific ideologies, in the name of inclusion? That might sound contradictory. But we can't create a democratic space if we welcome people who have anti-democratic values.

We recognise that we, too, still need to unlearn the racist, sexist, and patriarchal values we've internalised. And we know that unlearning is possible, because of all the progress that's been made on the balfolk scene in the last twenty years. Thanks to the efforts of many members of our community, more of us are able to dance how we choose. At many venues, dance roles are no longer divvied up along gender lines; some event organisers are working to book more female and LGBTQ* musicians; consent is discussed at dance workshops.

We cannot become complacent. The progress made over the last decades can't be allowed to go to waste. We need to keep working, so that People of Colour, Disabled people, Trans* people, and many other groups can take part in balfolk events without experiencing discrimination.

For this to happen, we have to exclude far-right ideologies - and, when necessary, people who subscribe to them - from balfolk events.

Who are we?

We're a group of event organisers, dancers, and musicians from all over Germany who have come together to take a clear stance against prejudice and rightwing ideology on the balfolk scene.

If you'd like to get in touch, send us an email:

diversity.balfolk@posteo.de

More information, advice for event organisers, and a JPG file of our logo are available via email.

Further information
(in German)



Sources (in German)

¹ <https://www.endstation-rechts.de/news/anastasia-fest-der-liebe-eine-prise-nsdap-romantik-und-energiekleider>

² ausführlich im Podcast „Seelenfänger“, Bayerischer Rundfunk, z.Bsp.
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/Oj3NtjBFbwNwBUwr6IH2vK?si=fde452e18243401c>

³ <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2019/04/brandenburg-rechte-siedler-gemeinschaft-anastasia-grabow-liebe.html>

⁴ Stern TV: Video über eine Demonstration des neonazistischen "Dritten Wegs" in Plauen 2019 -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_jjqQ2ILOE