

## Press Release

### Theatertreffen 2021: The Selection of 10 Productions

In a digital press conference, today, 9 February 2021, the jury of the Theatertreffen presented their selection of ten remarkable productions from an extraordinary and challenging theatre year to be nominated for an invitation to the 58th Theatertreffen. In their selection of ten productions, the independent jury once again implemented a female quota of at least 50 percent in the directing position.

Between 27 January 2020 and 5 February 2021, critics Cornelia Fiedler, Wolfgang Höbel, Georg Kasch, Andreas Klæui, Sabine Leucht, Petra Paterno and Franz Wille viewed and discussed a total of 285 productions from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Due to the events connected to the pandemic and subsequent theatre closures, the jury's selection process increasingly involved the viewing of recordings and, for the first time, they also considered digital productions. The final jury session took place yesterday – once again online.

The productions nominated for an invitation to the 58th Theatertreffen are:

- **“Automatenbüfett”** by Anna Gmeyer  
Directed by Barbara Frey | Burgtheater (Vienna)
- **“Der Zauberberg” (The Magic Mountain)**  
Based on Thomas Mann  
Directed and designed by Sebastian Hartmann | Deutsches Theater Berlin
- **“Einfach das Ende der Welt”**  
Based on Jean-Luc Lagarce  
And a translation by Uli Menke  
Directed by Christopher Rüping | Schauspielhaus Zürich
- **“Graf Öderland”**  
A Ballad in Twelve Scenes by Max Frisch  
Directed by Stefan Bachmann  
A co-production of Theater Basel (artistic directorship Andreas Beck) and Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel/Residenztheater (Munich)
- **“Maria Stuart” (Mary Stuart)** by Friedrich Schiller  
Directed by Anne Lenk | Deutsches Theater Berlin
- **“Medea\*”**  
Based on Euripides by Leonie Böhm  
Directed by Leonie Böhm | Schauspielhaus Zürich

– **“NAME HER. Eine Suche nach den Frauen+“**

Idea, concept, text and direction by Marie Schleef

A production by Marie Schleef in cooperation with Ballhaus Ost (Berlin), Münchner Kammerspiele (Munich) and Kosmos Theater (Vienna).

– **“Reich des Todes“** by Rainald Goetz

Directed by Karin Beier | Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg

– **“Scores That Shaped Our Friendship“**

A project by and with Lucy Wilke and Paweł Duduś

Idea and concept by Lucy Wilke and Paweł Duduś

World premiere at schwere reiter (Munich).

Funded by the Cultural Department of State Capital of Munich, Bayerischer Landesverband für zeitgenössischen Tanz (BLZT) with funds from the Bavarian State Ministry for Science and the Arts, the district of Upper Bavaria and the Cultural Foundation of Stadtparkasse München. This production is supported by Tanztendenz München e.V.

– **“Show Me A Good Time“**

Conceived and directed by Gob Squad

A Gob Squad production. World premiere co-commissioned and co-produced by HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin) and La Jolla Playhouse Without Walls Series (San Diego). Co-produced by Künstlerhaus Mousonturm (Frankfurt/Main), Schlachthaus Theater Bern, Internationales Sommerfestival Kampnagel (Hamburg).

Yvonne Büdenhölzer, director of the Theatertreffen, on this year's selection:

“In several of the productions selected for this year's festival, the distance between performers on stage that has been a necessity for months has become a creative amplifier of the issues at hand. Strong signals have not only been coming from city theatres but also from the independent scene, which is the home of two out of the three directors and directing teams who are making their Theatertreffen-debut this year. 2020 was an extremely difficult year for the art and culture sector. That is why we feel it is all the more important to discuss and appreciate those productions and projects that could be realised regardless. And to talk about what was possible and what couldn't be achieved.”

**Theatertreffen-Jury**

With this year's festival edition, **Cornelia Fiedler** (Cologne), **Wolfgang Höbel** (Hamburg) and **Andreas Kläui** (Zurich) will conclude their jury membership. **Katrin Ullmann** (Hamburg), **Mathias Balzer** (Basel) and **Sascha Westphal** (Dortmund) will be appointed in their place. Together with **Georg Kasch**, **Sabine Leucht**, **Petra Paterno** and **Franz Wille**, these three critics will begin their work for the 2022 Theatertreffen. Berliner Festspiele would like to thank all jury members for their commitment and their work.

The jury and the festival's directors have agreed to extend the female quota of at least 50 percent in the directing position for another two years, up to and including the 2023 festival.

### **The Prospects of the 2021 Theatertreffen**

Corresponding to the dynamic development of the pandemic and the continual changes in conditions, aside from a digital festival edition in May 2021, a variety of alternative festival scenarios are currently being considered. Further details on how the 58th Theatertreffen will be carried out will presumably be published in March, including the precise dates of the festival.

At the core of Berliner Festspiele's Theatertreffen, which is funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, is the jury's selection of ten productions. Both Stückemarkt and the International Forum, which could not be presented as part of last year's virtual Theatertreffen, have invited the previously selected artists to the 2021 Theatertreffen. The same goes for the editorial team of the Theatertreffen-Blog. In this context, the Theatertreffen would like to thank its long-standing partners: the Federal Agency for Civic Education/bpb, Goethe-Institut, the Swiss cultural foundation Pro Helvetia and Stiftung Presse-Haus NRZ for their reliable support and trustful cooperation.

The cooperation project launched in 2020 together with the Academy for Theatre and Digitality in Dortmund and Initiative Digitale Dramaturgie will be continued and extended to include a digital showcase. On the occasion of Berliner Festspiele's 70th anniversary, a programme focus on "The Living Theatre" is being planned.

Every year, the Theatre Prize Berlin of Stiftung Preußische Seehandlung, the 3sat Award and the Alfred Kerr Acting Award are bestowed during the festival and at its conclusion. At this time, we cannot yet determine under which conditions the awards can be offered this year. The ceremony to award the 2020 Theatre Prize Berlin to actor Sandra Hüller will be hosted this year.

Under the title of "Starke Stücke", the Theatertreffen's long-standing media partner 3sat will once again present three recordings produced specifically for this purpose of productions invited to the festival in their programme.

*The festival is funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. The Theatertreffen would like to thank all its funders, partners and supporters as well as all participants for their trustful cooperation.*

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## Statements of the jury

### **Automatenbüfett**

By Anna Gmeyer

Directed by Barbara Frey

Burgtheater (Vienna)

Premiere 30 October 2020

Anna Gmeyer's "Automatenbüfett" is a rediscovery. The playwright is often compared to Ödon von Horváth, mainly to her disadvantage. And yet her female characters especially are tough fighters – quite different from Horváth's forlorn damsels. Just in time before the lockdown, director Barbara Frey has created a mellow and easy-handed production at Vienna's Akademietheater, not remotely pandering to the genre-typical victim roles of the petit bourgeois panopticon. The stage is the first thing that stands out: Martin Zehetgruber has set an oversized automat into the theatre, which provides sausages and beer around the clock to anyone who drops a coin into it. The stage musician also plays for cash only. The director takes a stand against total automatization by committing her company to an artificial repertoire of movements. Everything happens with deliberate slowness – an eye for detail is more important than the grand gesture. "Automatenbüfett" is subtle, deeply sad and uproariously funny.

### **Der Zauberberg (The Magic Mountain)**

Based on Thomas Mann

Directed and designed by Sebastian Hartmann

Deutsches Theater Berlin

Live Stream Premiere 20 November 2020

In his production of "Der Zauberberg (The Magic Mountain)" at Deutsches Theater Berlin, director Sebastian Hartmann eschews all re-narration. Instead, he takes an approach that is fundamentally different from the usual stage adaptations of Thomas Mann's opus. Hartmann explores philosophical aspects such as the phenomenon of time and finiteness, the question of how to live right and finally the horror and the fascination of war and death. Hartmann also makes do without any authorial narrating position; rather, the scenes follow the dramaturgy of a nightmare: association trumps narration, emotion trumps reason. What emerges is an artfully intentional loss of control. Post-dramatic devices like repetition, choreographed sequences and choric passages dominate, cameras extend our view to include the back and side stages. In padded bodysuits, the characters drag themselves across the emptied set; they appear to lack all identity and are strangely disfigured. "I am lost to the world", someone says during the two-hour live stream. In an auditorium abandoned by the audience, in a world choked by the pandemic, sentences like this can wield an enormous impact.

**Einfach das Ende der Welt**

Based on Jean-Luc Lagarce

And a translation by Uli Menke

Directed by Christopher Rüping

Schauspielhaus Zürich

Premiere 3 December 2020

“Einfach das Ende der Welt” is the story of the prodigal son, Louis – here Benjamin (Lillie) – who left for the metropolis at the age of twenty, to live the life of a homosexual and an artist. Twelve years later he returns, terminally ill, to talk to his family. Everything that could go wrong does go wrong – or rather, goes exactly as it should. Christopher Rüping ruthlessly exposes the inescapable loneliness that all protagonists are caught up in: a mutual lack of understanding, projections, the obsessive family web. There are heart-rending moments where an immense longing for love and appreciation shines through in each one of them. In a prolonged, tense exposition, Benjamin initially dwells on his old home as a place of memories, an obsessive feel-good-setting, which, however, has to yield to a hard and austere present in his confrontation with his family. Nothing is ever unambiguous, there is no solution in sight, points of view permanently shift and form a beautiful neurotic construct.

**Graf Öderland**

A Ballad in Twelve Scenes by Max Frisch

Directed by Stefan Bachmann

A co-production of Theater Basel (artistic directorship Andreas Beck) and Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel/Residenztheater (Munich)

Premiere 14 February 2020 (Basel)

“Graf Öderland” is an irrational rampage from the midst of society. A prosecutor who can no longer make sense of the world or the law, literally falls into a hole. A giant, horizontal funnel dominates the stage: People tumble out of it; they climb and plummet inside it. The prosecutor and a murderer with no motive merge into the monstrous image of “Graf Öderland with an axe in his hand”, who rages through the land on a murderous spree. Stefan Bachmann stages this nightmare of civilisation, this frenzy of violence, in overwhelming atmospheric images and surreal night-terror parades. Actor Thiemo Strutzenberger is a high-risk Öderland, a man for whom the dividing lines between waking dream and panicked clarity have long since become permeable. And the question of how alienation, cultural anxiety and a feeling of tedium in civil society can suddenly shift into aggression is one that we need to look at today.

**Maria Stuart (Mary Stuart)**

By Friedrich Schiller

Directed by Anne Lenk

Deutsches Theater Berlin

Premiere 30 October 2020

Human contact is scarcely possible in this letter-case set: Pink chambers separate the characters in Anne Lenk's production of "Maria Stuart (Mary Stuart)", turning them into prisoners regardless of their status or situation. At the centre, Julia Windischbauer's Elizabeth struggles to keep her composure, timidly and nerdily clinging to power, while Franziska Machens's Mary fights to have the last word with snotty irony. A nightmare of a pair who hide behind poker faces and masks at crucial moments rather than practising female solidarity. It's no wonder that the men – figures of fun as they all may be – are able to hatch their plots. How Elisabeth still manages to thwart them in the end (at an emotional price) is one of the great moments of this show, rich as it is in subtle acting.

### **Medea\***

Based on Euripides by Leonie Böhm

Directed by Leonie Böhm

Schauspielhaus Zürich

Premiere 19 September 2020

Medea is desolate, at a dead end. This is what Leonie Böhm's production – essentially a monologue – underlines from the very beginning. Social bonds have been torn, there is no solid ground (only floating cloth), and the destructive and self-destructive actions have already set their own inevitable momentum into motion. Böhm shows us a woman in free fall. She is less interested in the inhuman act of infanticide than in the development that precedes this *passage à l'acte*. The self-empowerment that it entails. The new options for self-fulfilment that it may create. This Medea from Zurich is one who has read Christa Wolf and who is at least somewhat familiar with Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Walter Benjamin. Even if – apart from some improvised text – she speaks mainly in Euripides' words. A Medea of our times, who crashes and burns our entire sick system. The way actor Maja Beckmann develops this, the way Leonie Böhm arranges it in images, the way Johannes Rieder reflects it in music – is breath-taking and intelligent.

### **NAME HER. Eine Suche nach den Frauen+**

Idea, concept, text and direction by Marie Schleef

A production by Marie Schleef in cooperation with Ballhaus Ost (Berlin), Münchner Kammerspiele (Munich) and Kosmos Theater (Vienna). Funded with the support of Hauptstadtkulturfonds and the district of Pankow (Berlin), office of further education, arts and culture – funding for arts and culture

World Premiere 25 September 2020 (Ballhaus Ost, Berlin)

Where did all the women go? Because they did exist, the composers, scientists and submarine engineers who have kept things ticking over for centuries. In "NAME HER. Eine Suche nach den Frauen+", Marie Schleef and Anne Tismer have erected a monument to them. In four sets of 90 minutes each, Tismer dances chemical formulas in front of a mobile phone display triptych, performs spies, talks about heroines of everyday life. Some of the

items are fed in as a video, a sound, a projected text; sometimes Schleef intervenes from the control desk. Individual highlights make up a sum that demonstrates how neglectful our society has been and still is today of women's achievements. And that counters the seemingly endless alphabetic series with an astonishing variety of narrative strategies and theatrical devices.

### **Reich des Todes**

By Rainald Goetz

Directed by Karin Beier

Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg

World Premiere 11 September 2020

What we see on this dungeon-like stage, designed by Johannes Schütz, is a frenzy of video images, dance scenes and impersonated politicians, an almost Brechtian theatre of enlightenment and memory. In Karin Beier's production, the theatre sits in judgment over the US-American government's moral degeneracy following the attacks of 11 September 2001 – but also over us. This brutally accusatory play by author Rainald Goetz gives rather silly German names to men like Donald Rumsfeld or George W. Bush; through devices including a Hitler-parody, the actors demonstrate the kinship between fascist brutalization and the cynicism of 21st century power politics. The fascination of crime and the archaic scandal of violence are depicted in grotesquely aestheticized scenes of war and torture. An orchestra of voices invokes the thunderstorm of thoughts inside the poet's head and the mortal fear in all of us. Staying largely close to the text, this production is an immoderate, splendidly gloomy, disturbing description of our present times.

### **Scores That Shaped Our Friendship**

A project by and with Lucy Wilke and Paweł Duduś

Idea and concept by Lucy Wilke and Paweł Duduś

World premiere at schwere reiter (Munich).

Funded by the Cultural Department of State Capital of Munich, Bayerischer Landesverband für zeitgenössischen Tanz (BLZT) with funds from the Bavarian State Ministry for Science and the Arts, the district of Upper Bavaria and the Cultural Foundation of Stadtparkasse München. This production is supported by Tanztendenz München e.V.

World Premiere 13 February 2020 (schwere reiter, Munich)

In seven short chapters, actor Lucy Wilke, who was born with spinal muscular atrophy, and the queer dancer Paweł Duduś survey and celebrate their special friendship. By means of language and dance, subtly synchronised movements, intimate two-body-sculptures and journeys of the mind, they address the established narrative of dependence and victimhood in order to overcome it, at least for the moment, through the freedom of acting and imagination. The pair attempt the utopian idea of an unconditional acceptance that can extend the limits of friendship towards lust and sensuality. They are very aware of its fragility and the cruelty of normative attributions, but they simply turn his 'feminine' movements and her standard rejection on Tinder – "You have such a pretty face but ..." –

into their very own playing material. This fragile independent show turns out to be uncompromising in its rejection of categories, and as a tender, laid-back *pas de deux* of touch, it exudes a phenomenal force. Not only in these touch-less times.

### Show Me A Good Time

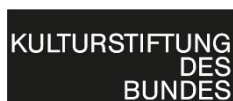
Conceived and directed by Gob Squad

A Gob Squad production. World premiere co-commissioned and co-produced by HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin) and La Jolla Playhouse Without Walls Series (San Diego). Co-produced by Künstlerhaus Mousonturm (Frankfurt/Main), Schlachthaus Theater Bern, Internationales Sommerfestival Kampnagel (Hamburg). Supported by Fonds Darstellende Künste with funds from the Minister of State for Culture and the Media. Gob Squad is funded by the Berlin Senate – Department for Culture and Europe  
Live Stream World Premiere 20 June 2020 (HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin)

This show is an allegory and a portrait of our first Corona-year: Just like in Zoom-meetings with family or friends, the dialogues stretch across miles and time-zones. Gob Squad set out to find the big issues that we dealt with in 2020 in the mundane: dying, nature, environment, hygiene, the future of the theatre. The structure of this chatting and strolling is determined by the city (one performer is at the local theatre, the others fan out) and by the quarter-hourly tasks that are set. Thus, time itself becomes the protagonist: sometimes with a Hofmannsthalesque melancholy, sometimes with a casual gesture of extravagance, sometimes with astonishment at the synchronicity of the asynchronous or in wild, personal time travel. This show is interesting even when it is idling. It works as a marathon of twelve hours, a chance to delight in warming ourselves near the virtual camp fire of a theatre that works in both the analogue and the digital realm.

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